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THE CAREER OF MRS. OSBORNE

By S. Carleton and Helen Milecete

WHEN Captain George Wilton of the Royal Irish Fusiliers, only son of Colonel and Mrs. Wilton of The Cedars, Elmhurst, Berkshire, married an American, his mother fainted. When, two years after, he sent his wife and her sister home from India to reside under the paternal roof until his return, she fainted no more. Instead, a fine light of battle rose in her small brown eyes with the advent of the two daughters of Heth. They should be shown what it meant to brave an outraged English mother in her own drawing-room.

And shown they were throughout an English Winter, with kind advice and other things that left them calm as glass, till one night in April, when Mrs. George Wilton by the light of one composition candle read and re-read a paragraph in *Vanity Fair*.

It was a small thing to rouse the spirit of the Declaration of Independence in a woman who had married because she was asked to marry, and had borne tacitly with the rule of a mother-in-law because she was asked to bear with it; but rouse that spirit it did. Jane Egerton had married with a Background, a gorgeous tapestry of life with one figure in it. Even on her wedding day her husband had been as a faint etching hung on the splendid color, the too bold lines of that never forgotten Background. And here—the paper shook in her shaking hand—the Background was alive again; was “become a multi-millionaire by the tragic death of his unmarried uncle in the ill-fated *S. S. City of Perth*; had taken a house in Grosvenor Crescent and would entertain largely dur-

ing the season.” The new millionaire was but thirty-three, and unmarried.

“Miles,” said Mrs. George Wilton to herself, “Miles in London! And I’m here, dead and buried—and married to a Wilton!” She wished wildly that she had married a duke or a Vanderbilt, to be able to meet Miles Van Ingen and tell him so.

She remembered the last time she had seen him. It was at church, the evening service. She could see now that country choir, the ghostly purples and pinks of the east window against the dying light outside. It was a queer way to remember Van Ingen, but it was true; just as the walk home afterward was true, and the good-bye under the big hornbeam by the gate he had been forbidden to enter. He had had no money, no more had she—of course it had been good-bye; he was not the sort of man to ask a girl to marry him and exist in a two-by-four house in Brooklyn. But there was money now, hers as well as his; and—her thoughts crowded so that she could not think. Her eyes fell on a paragraph below the one she had been reading.

Mrs. George Wilton clutched the paper tight to a leaping heart, stared at her own face in the glass and turned from absolutely white to scarlet, and back again. With shoeless feet she stole along the corridor to the door of her sister’s bedroom and closed it behind her with elaborate caution.

“Is the oil stove lit?” she demanded. “Thank heaven!” But she stretched her chilled hands over the hot brass without gratitude. Sarah groaned.

"I've spoiled my best dressing gown trying to abate the smell," she said. "Does it smell—much—outside?"

"Not at all." Jane had been conscious of paraffin yards down the passage, but why say so? Were not the Wilton family all in bed in woolen nightgowns, and safe till morning? Let it smell.

She disposed herself as near the stove as possible, while a polite clock somewhere rang half-past twelve. Everything was genteel in the house of her mother-in-law except her father-in-law, and he was unspeakable. An old Indian who does not smoke and never controls his temper usually is. Colonel Wilton managed his family and his house with a precision as dull as a Scotch story. The days at The Cedars rolled by in heavy state, punctuated neatly with meals and finished elegantly at ten o'clock with the full stop of prayers.

The object in life of Colonel and Mrs. Wilton was to marry their daughters. They said so in unadorned phrases to their daughter-in-law and her sister. The two girls themselves spoke of possible matches with snug smiles. The smooth garden, the neat fields, the solemn dinners and the weary evenings all seemed saturated with matchmaking to the two American visitors, to whom marriage had never been pointed out as The Only Career of Woman.

The two Misses Wilton were considered by their parents to be "on approval," but the supposed approvers had said nothing—they were merely constant in coming to tea.

It had struck none of the Wiltons that the appearance of these male lights on the horizon was coeval with the arrival of Mrs. George Wilton and her sister Miss Egerton. Life at The Cedars did not sharpen the wits. No one ever did anything there but eat, drink and gossip. A letter was an event—to be inquired into. Heavy puddings at luncheon were followed by heavier ones at dinner. There were no duties, no diversions; and Jane and Sarah had endured existence

there for months. Their Colonial blood ran thin in the damp of a cold April, when they were not allowed fires because the label of the month was Spring. In boredom and a raging east wind their noses grew red and chilly, till Sarah in desperation had invested in her contraband oil stove. But Jane was oblivious of it now, even while she sat by it and thawed.

"Sarah," she said, sharply, "are you happy?"

Sarah stared at her.

"Happy! After this afternoon? When Mr. O'Hara came in with his cheerful smile and his red-gold hair—" warming to her subject in the malodorous cheer of her cherished stove and regardless of a certain look on her sister's face—"and mamma-in-law prepared to annex him, then it was that he sat down by me. Think of my daring to appropriate Amelia's lawful prey! Mamma-in-law could have killed me. No wonder she gave us boiled veal for dinner. For you were no better. She intended Mr. Hopkins for Evelyn, and it was you by whom he seated himself, while his looks—oh, if his looks had only been turned on Amelia! But a married woman has no right to looks from a young man."

"As if I did not hear that every day!" Jane's voice was drily indifferent, her frown contemptuous. "And what do I want of a Hopkins?"

Sarah shrugged her shoulders.

"He and Mr. O'Hara are all we've had to keep us alive," she said. "Not that they're much pleasure to me. I hate talking to a man when I am surrounded by females with their mouths open like young robins. But we'd have looked well at that ball without them!"

For Colonel Wilton had taken his two daughters, his daughter-in-law and her sister to the Hunt Ball in haste; and had repented at leisure. Jane and Sarah had danced all night with the men who should have been dancing with Evelyn and Amelia. The atmosphere at The Cedars had been thunderous since that ball;

Amelia had flashed sheet lightning to the effect that married women should never go to balls; they were sold, and no longer "on approval." Mrs. Wilton's lightning was the forked form of regretting the exploring and annexing and marrying tendency of young and unprotected Englishmen in wild regions, such as America. The insult to her beloved country stung Sarah now.

"I wish we were in New York," she said, viciously, getting up and beginning to brush her waving hair. "But as we're here I suppose we may as well go to bed. There is nothing to get up for to-morrow, but if we don't sleep we shall look even worse than we do. Your nose was bright red to-day when the drawing-room was so cold." Sarah was vilely truthful.

But truth was what Jane had come for. She stood up in her white dressing gown, her throat rising very straight and round out of its lace and chiffon, her eyes hard, her young shoulders held superbly.

"Sarah," she said, "look at me—look hard. Do you think I'm good-looking? I don't mean pretty. I mean—more."

Sarah's brush waved in mid-air.

"I always said you were a fool to throw yourself away on George, even if it was while we were poor," she said, with the composure of contempt. "You know you're lovely; you always were, even at fifteen. Why do you want me to tell you so?" She looked clear-eyed at Jane as she spoke, at her chestnut-brown hair, her brown eyes, her exquisite azalea-colored cheeks; saw, as the world saw when Jane Wilton passed by, her grace, her carriage, her air that was half princess and half child. "Much good it has done you to be beautiful," she added, huskily, though she liked George. Perhaps she knew too well why Jane had married him.

But Jane's eyes only brightened.

"That's all I wanted to know," she returned, coolly, and sat down. "No woman's beautiful for nothing—when she knows it. It's going to do this

much good, it will get us away from here. You said there was nothing to get up for, and no joy in life—but there shall be." She threw back her head with confidence, as became a woman who had always been lovely. "We will go away from here. We will take a flat in London."

"Take a flat!" with an incredulous glare.

"Take a flat," firmly, "in London. We will live by ourselves, do everything, go everywhere." She swept her hand comprehensively round the horizon.

"We can't," said Sarah, crushingly. "You know they'd never let us go."

"Look here; did you ever read 'Uncle Remus'?"

Sarah nodded.

"Well, when he was just driven to desperation he 'lammed alooze,' and so shall I. We might know plenty of nice people in England. We'll never see any here."

"Men." Sarah's tone was soft and thoughtful.

"Well, men, if you like," unabashed. "But people, not monsters. Anyhow, we are going up to town next week to take a flat near a woman who's a relation of ours, quite a grand person and a beauty."

Sarah gasped.

"What's her name?" she demanded. "Whom do you mean?"

"Jane Osborne," with lofty calm.

Miss Egerton sat paralyzed. When she spoke it was in an awestruck whisper.

"But she——"

"Yes, I know," stolidly. "But the Wiltons don't. And I sha'n't tell them much about her. I don't want them to hunt her down and spend all their waking hours calling on her when they go up to town."

"But she can't be in London; she——"

"She can, just as well as we can. Are you an idiot, Sarah? Don't you remember Newport? She was useful enough there."

Sarah bounced in her chair.

"For two days," she said, sol-

emly. "And this isn't Newport. And do you imagine you can choke the Wiltons off her—let alone anyone else?"

"I can—just because this isn't Newport. London's a big place; they won't move in Mrs. Osborne's set. They'll never see her."

Sarah broke into wild laughter.

"A beauty!" she gasped. "Oh, I'm not objecting. I dare say she'll be useful, she sounds so respectable. Mrs. Osborne, it's the name of one of the King's houses; even Mrs. Wilton will think it grand. But I can't see why—"

"You will by-and-bye. Don't you see we must have someone? I'm managing her; you let me alone. Listen now. I shall have a toothache to-morrow, I shall go up to town to see the dentist, and—make arrangements. Why should we stay here? These people are as horrid to us as they dare to be. Praise the saints, they will be ragingly astounded when we say that we're going, and that we've a cousin, Mrs. Osborne, to take us under her wing. They'll be frightened of her, too. Commas don't matter, but you have to take notice of a full stop."

"Why is she a full stop?" breathlessly. "And why do you want her to come to London?"

"Because she's a period," darkly, "and you'll know soon enough why I want her, if you don't now."

"So will George," drily, "when he arrives from India and finds us in town instead of under his paternal roof."

Jane's face went white with passion.

"Let George alone. I'm tired of this eternal George dinned at me. He *would* marry me—oh, I know he's dear and nice and sweet, but I want to *live*. I want to be free. I never had any youth, you know I never had. I'm going to use what's left while I can—I'll have forty years to live George's life. Now I'm going to live my own, with Mrs. Osborne and you. Besides," her voice was lowered again, "I can say I really couldn't

stand George's people. I hope he'll never grow like them."

Sarah reflected.

"He did look like his mother once, the wet day he made you wear rubbers," she said.

"No, he didn't, Sarah," sharply. "Besides, I'd rather go away and be killed for it than stay here, for I should be certain to go mad or get very plain. We'll go as soon as I can get a—roof to cover us in town. As for George, it will be time enough to worry about confessing to him when I have something to confess," with a pale smile. "We didn't come to England to be shut up in jail; we came to enjoy ourselves. And we're going to do it through Mrs. Osborne. For if I told the bare truth about being bored here and wanting to be amused, Mrs. Wilton would send me to a lunatic asylum. She has taught me to be a liar already; if I stayed here she'd teach me to be a murderer. I am going to 'lam loose,' and, incidentally, pay back every insult she has put on us. Of course," with lofty virtue, "I shall not do anything I'd mind confessing to George."

She gathered her dressing gown about her as she prepared to slip cautiously back to her own room; the paper she had brought with her fell on the carpet—she had got all she wanted out of it.

Sarah put out the oil stove and got into bed by the light of the one candle with which she nightly ruined her eyes in the effort to read a sufficiency of cheerful literature to counteract the effect of the day on her mind.

"Don't worry," she remarked, disposing her pillows high. "You'll do enough—but you won't confess it," and she smiled the smile of security in the dim light. She bestowed no thought whatever on Mrs. Osborne. The *Vanity Fair* Jane had left behind caught her eye where it lay humped on the floor, and she clawed it with a long arm. It was folded back at the two paragraphs Jane had read—and not mentioned. At the first Miss Egerton started with enlightenment;

the second she read aloud to her empty room and her one candle:

There is an unparalleled opening in town this season for a new beauty. It is said, above a whisper, that there will not be a *débutante* possessed even of average good looks; and for those who are not *débutantes* it is permitted to say that it is a long time since they have worn their baby shoes. A new beauty, real and undeniable, and transatlantic for choice, would have the ball at her feet this year. Transatlantic, I say, because we all know how few questions are asked about Beauty backed by Dollars and untrammelled by the "Almanach de Gotha."

"Mrs. Osborne!" said Sarah, in an eldritch whisper. "Goodness gracious me!"

II

SARAH sat surrounded by Wiltons in a room that was stuffy in spite of being chilly. She was ostentatiously doing needlework, but she wore her best manner nervously, for Jane had gone to town the day before, and the atmosphere of The Cedars was straining to the nerves when taken undiluted.

"I wonder how Jane's toothache is?" she remarked, tentatively. "I think I will go down to the village and send her a wire."

Mrs. Wilton turned from her writing table with smooth disapproval.

"Oh, why go out? The roads are so damp after last night's storm."

"Storm? Oh, but there wasn't any storm," with wide eyes.

"There was heavy rain," decidedly. "But if you think it necessary to telegraph," with emphasis—wire was a vulgar term, even commercial—"I will fill up this form for you, and James can take it to the village."

"I should like the walk," faintly.

"Oh, but I think you walk far too much. You keep yourselves thin, you and Jane, with your energetic ways," eyeing Sarah's slight and languid figure with disapproval. "Shall I write your telegram?"

"Please don't trouble. I can go down this afternoon."

"You are so independent," Mrs. Wilton murmured, sweetly.

Sarah fidgeted. Why had she been such a fool as not to go to town with Jane? Her head ached in the closeness and her arms crept with gooseflesh in the sunless room. Mrs. Wilton never admitted the sun into her house—it faded the carpets.

"If you want to go out, perhaps you would go into the garden with Amelia and pick some flowers," with kindly concession.

"I am not going to do the flowers this morning," said Amelia, looking up from a nightmare of blue embroidery that she was making lurid with red and yellow. "They were done the day before yesterday. But presently I am going to pick slugs off the anemones. Sarah might come and help me there if she likes."

Sarah shuddered. The fat, slimy things that were soft and cold through her glove, the jar of salt and water to which they must be consigned, made her ill.

"I—I don't think I'll go out this morning, thank you, Amelia," she uttered, faintly. Better a thousand miles of elegant embroidery than half an hour bent double in the exciting slug chase. "My head aches to-day. I think I'll go and take a powder."

"I do not think it can be good to take drugs for headache, my dear Sarah." Remonstrance was the breath of life to Mrs. Wilton. "Try to bear it and it will pass away."

"Those long walks you and Jane take must be bad for you. Evelyn and I never walk, it is so tiring." Thus Amelia.

Sarah bent her eyes firmly on her work, her small, pale face quite expressionless. "If you would walk, or ride, or bicycle, or *something*, you might not be so unbearable to live with," she thought, passionately. "If something doesn't happen soon I shall scream, I know I shall."

There was a little stir in the room as a servant came in bearing a note, a very large note on a very small tray. The weary Sarah did not look

up. No one ever wrote her any notes at The Cedars.

"You can bring it to me, James." Mrs. Wilton spoke condescendingly, for James was passing by her.

"It is not for you, m'm," uncomfortably. James was a new importation and still had notions of the rights of property.

Mrs. Wilton's brow clouded and then cleared magnanimously.

"If it is for Miss Wilton she is with the Colonel in his study."

James was determined if trembling.

"It is for Miss Egerton, m'm."

Sarah started violently. With a trembling hand she took the large white note from the tray. Why had he used so monogrammed an envelope? Why sent it by hand? Oh, if Jane were only here! She rose to leave the room.

"Pray open your letter, my dear."

"Fancy your getting a note! You don't know anyone in the neighborhood—at least, not well." Amelia gazed at the letter with curiosity, but Sarah had clutched the monogram to her palm. "What can it be? An invitation?"

"Hardly, my dear Amelia. Sarah would only be asked anywhere as belonging to our party. Pray open your note, Sarah; we are quite dying of curiosity."

"Don't you know who it's from, Sarah?"

Miss Egerton's drooping soul rose to arms. She was under no obligation to tell the truth to Amelia. With a calm eye and a careful hand she opened the exciting letter, and for one instant sat appalled.

This is to warn you that I am asked over to luncheon. I must see you and hear your plans. I met your sister yesterday and went as far as the junction with her. She seemed in great pain, and told me she found this air too relaxing, and thought of taking a flat in town. O'Hara and I are going up in a day or two. Do tell me your plans. She was looking wretched.

"She!" And this was Amelia's supposed adorer! Coming to lunch-

eon! He would talk about Jane. How was she to stop him?

"Well, my dear, have you solved the mystery? Is your letter from the rectory?" Even a Yankee connection may be allowed to have notes from the parson's wife.

Sarah's blue eyes met Mrs. Wilton's small brown ones without a tremor. "My note is from Mrs.—Osborne." And if she faintly hesitated before the name no one observed it.

"And who is Mrs. Osborne, my dear?"

"We don't know any Osbornes," in unison.

"She is an American—" once launched Sarah was floating nobly—"a great friend of ours."

"Oh! I suppose she is staying in the county somewhere?"

The desperate Sarah, slipping the monogrammed note wrong side up into a safe pocket, supposed she was.

"I shall ask Mr. Hopkins if he knows her; he is coming to luncheon." Mrs. Wilton purred with excitement. "Amelia, go and put on that pale-green frock of yours. Dear child!" as the obedient Amelia departed, "she looks so Springlike in it. I always say anyone can wear blue." Sarah wore it all day and every day. "It needs a complexion to wear green."

Sarah was spared a reply by the arrival of Mr. Hopkins, which did not raise her depressed spirit. But she forgot his being small and fussy, because he bore a friendly face; even his blue serge clothes she looked on kindly, till after luncheon. After luncheon they played croquet. Sarah soon saw why Mr. Hopkins had proposed it, for he hit no ball but hers.

"Dear lady, I must speak to you." He settled his ball with care. "Or would you write to me?"

"Colonel Wilton looks over every letter in the postbag."

"Let me meet you somewhere in the village."

"With all the family at my heels," drily.

"I'll write you to-morrow, then."

"For heaven's sake, never write again!"

"But I must know when you are leaving. Your sister said you would tell me. I'll send a boy for a message."

"Don't send any boys to me," furiously.

It was all very well that Mr. Hopkins and Mr. O'Hara should follow them to town as useful adorers, but they should do no more; she would not have them sitting at the door of her flat till she wanted them. Besides, for all she knew Jane's town plans comprehended neither a Hopkins nor an O'Hara.

"It is of no use asking me things," she said, sternly. "I don't know what we are going to do. But we'll write to you from town. I can't write a letter here without being asked why I'm writing; I can't go out without being told not to tire myself and asked where I'm going; I can't even say 'No, thank you,' to pudding. And if you want to say anything to me, don't whisper. You do growl so when you whisper!"

"Dear Sarah does get so excited about games. She is so energetic about everything," said that Spring lamb Amelia to Hopkins as he returned to her side.

And Mr. Hopkins made no reply.

III

Miss EGERTON sprawled on the sofa in a furnished flat in the suburb of West Kensington and surveyed her sister. To arrive at a servantless abode after dark was not her idea of "lamming aloo," and she said so.

Jane laughed.

"I am going to call on my godmother this morning," she said.

"She won't know you from Eve."

"So much the better," with a little laugh. "You wait," and she vanished.

The godmother was Lady Jane Mandeville, daughter of the Earl of Shropshire and wife of Sir Richard Mandeville, late Ambassador at Washington and a power in the land.

Sarah thought, and said nothing. She would make a divine wife for some man some day; this capacity for holding her tongue would be a priceless benefit to her husband. Of course she was well aware that Jane's visit to her godmother was the result of but one fact—the presence of Miles Van Ingen in town. But Sarah had none of the qualities of a missionary; she had no sermon to preach. However, she would take good care that Jane's little ship should not fly the pirate flag too long or get into troubled seas. For the rest—well, she as well as her sister had the "*wander lust*" in her blood after her course of Wilton society.

Mrs. George Wilton emerged from her coupé at Lady Jane's house in Prince's Gardens looking a vision in frills of soft lace and dull-pink muslin and a hat solely constructed of apple blossoms that would have made a Devonshire apple tree look as if suffering from blight.

Lady Jane was at home. She did not remember her goddaughter, but as Jane had been exactly two when the Ambassadors left Washington she had not expected an affectionate greeting. No one with a figure more like a hippopotamus than any other living thing can possess the memory of a Royalty. She promptly explained that she was one of the goddaughters.

Lady Jane began with the painfully affable smile she had acquired in the early days of her husband's career, but she gradually succumbed to the charm of the girl, and waxed natural.

"Was your father the copper Egerton, or the oil, my dear?" she inquired.

"Neither," said Jane, firmly. "He was the Senator."

"Oh, of course!" cheerfully. "I know all about you now. You must forgive me for my want of memory. After I left Washington I learned my work better, and I kept a book. There were so many babies wherever I went, and I am a wretched hand at names," plaintively. "I never could tell them apart unless their mothers

were with them." She sighed, and then her fat face lit up. This girl was more than pretty, and had come just in the nick of time to save her trouble. Sir Richard Mandeville was rather a bother to his obedient spouse, and that very morning had told her her parties consisted of the ugliest women in London—adding that he knew why, with a sneer. She had not answered him; her passion for her too amorous lord had only survived sufficiently to make her wish to keep him innocently amused, and here was the means at her hand.

"Of course you married Osborne," she said, and plainly Mrs. Osborne's name was not unknown to her, for she nodded approval.

Jane sat in scarlet silence, and then nodded like a mandarin. It was not she who had told a lie.

"Well, you are not 'Plain Jane,' as they used to call me in the days of my youth! You will have a great success here, I foresee that. You are lucky to be a widow and so fascinating. I am very glad to see you," and she was—it would take Richard off her mind.

"I am giving a ball next week;" her playful manner was almost elephantinely ridiculous. "You must come. I love pretty people, and your women do know how to dress. I yearn to have a beauty at my shows." Here Lady Jane beamed with great amiability. "You must let me see a lot of you and your companion. Did you say she was your cousin?"

"No," replied Jane, truthfully, if reluctantly. But her godmother did not wait for explanations. Sir Richard had killed her taste for them—he had so many for one sin, and all so different, that it was not surprising.

"You must let me launch you," was all she said.

Jane laughed for joy. It was such plain sailing, and she did so long to be happy and forget the whole duty of woman as preached by the Wilton family. She rose to go.

"Good-bye, dear." Lady Jane kissed her new-found godchild with

effusion. She had a meeting at two on the disposal of superfluous women, and the thought was depressing. How could she, one of the most superfluous of women, dispose of the others?

But Jane departed feeling as if someone were waving chiffon through her cloudy brain. She paid a mysterious visit to a house-agent, and wrote a note to Lady Jane, after securing a furnished house and its stamped note paper.

Lunch time had long passed when Mrs. George Wilton arrived at her suburban flat, to find Sarah yawning in a big chair by the window.

"You've been away a century," said Miss Egerton, crossly. "I suppose she kicked you out. Your frills weren't wasted on her footman, I dare say. Did she make you feel small? Oh, I've been so bored! I have had nothing to do but count fourteen women with purple faces playing tennis in the square, and each one's skirt was four inches longer in the back than in the front. Why does the suburban woman think there is something immoral in a smart short skirt?"

"Eve did not bother about her toilet or the lack of it till she met the devil," said Jane, sententiously. "They haven't met him. Nowadays it is worse to be suburban than American; even Colonials are better than dwellers in Suburbia."

"I don't want to hear about Imperialism," said Sarah, petulantly. "I want to hear your adventures. And I may as well tell you, I won't live here!"

"You needn't," said Jane, concisely. "She asked us to a ball next week. Have you a gown?"

"Have I a gown? I've four gowns. Did she really ask us? Is it—" in a tone of concentrated fear—"all right?"

Jane nodded.

"You see before you—Mrs. Osborne!" she said. "Lady Jane says so."

"What?" The gentle Sarah's voice was slightly shrill.

"It must be Osborne, or no ball."

Jane's voice was languid. "And I've taken a house in Eaton Place."

"I see: 'no ball,' like cricket! Yet, after all, what's in a name?—except to the Wiltons. But Mr. Van Ingen," brutally, "where does he come in?"

"Don't know till I see him," coolly, though her face flushed.

"And this flat?" stupidly.

"Is for Wilton letters and Wilton visits," quietly. "We put a maid in it and come and go as it is necessary. No Wilton shall ever see Mrs. Osborne—or Lady Jane."

"Oh!" said Sarah. She rose with a skip. "Well, now let us think what I shall wear to the ball. Blue? Yes, blue, the immortal creation of my dear Paquin." And as Jane had cast care away, so did she, to all appearance.

IV

THE rooms at Lady Jane's were full, very full; yet the new goddaughter was noticed, most carefully noticed. The fame of the fortune of Jane Osborne had crossed the Atlantic, but wealth at a distance is not really interesting, and in this case distance had lent disenchantment, for certainly no one had ever heard of her good looks. Now the view was too alluring.

Mrs. Osborne wore white, white with the shine of moonlight on it, and in her eyes, too, was moonlight. She had plenty of partners, and if she kept some blanks in her card no one saw them. She stood discoursing to Sir Richard Mandeville, who, of all men in London, had the most brains and the quickest eye for the charms of a woman. But in spite of his outspoken admiration she was bored, and more. Her eyes ached with looking for the man she had come to find; and her heart, too, ached, in spite of the introduction to the great world her godmother had given her that night. As her host led her through the hall they were mobbed by a well-bred crowd, whose stares at the new star were too intent to be re-

assuring to Jane, even though her companion enjoyed them.

"They are worse than a mob of cattle looking at a red umbrella," said she, calmly.

Sir Richard laughed, being for once grateful to his wife.

"You are the red umbrella," he said.

She did not hear him. She saw a man leaning against the wall. He was tall, with sleepy gray eyes that she knew could sparkle like the sea in the sun; and his clean, hard chin with the little cleft in it, his determined mouth, were printed on her heart with indelible distinctness. That mouth had spoken the awful words that turned life into ashes for Jane Egerton, when he had said he never meant to marry, and said truly. The Wild World was his everlasting portion—the sea, the sound of wind in the rigging, the rip of the paddle, the sleep under the stars. All these things made life for him, not the arms of a woman, even of the woman he worshipped. If he could have had all, indeed! But to the poor man only one thing comes, and Van Ingen chose his—with soft words, yet he chose it. Now that he was a millionaire the woman who looked at him knew a choice was no longer necessary. For her, life with him would have been heaven. It is always so when a woman plays the game of life with gold and the man plays with counters. Her admiring companion, who knew he was one of the most attractive men in London, was quite happy, even to beaming at Lady Jane. To his wife's goddaughter he was only a little pebble on the side of the river of life, and while she pretended to listen to him her eyes looked long and long at the man against the wall. As if he had suddenly awakened from sleep Van Ingen started. For a moment the two pairs of eyes were locked; the next he was through the crowd and at her side.

"Ah, Van Ingen, I see you know Mrs. Osborne!" said Sir Richard, genially. He was surprised to find the two acquainted, but as he had to join

his wife to welcome Royalty he bowed the celebrated bow that had reduced the hearts of so many women to pulp, murmured he hoped she would remember her promise to him of the tenth dance, and vanished. Mr. Van Ingen took Mrs. Osborne's hand and put it on his arm. He held it rather high, close to his side; and she felt his heart beating like a trip-hammer. Without speaking they went down the steps to a little door that led to a tiny garden—empty as Paradise.

"The grass is wet." Mrs. Osborne hesitated on the edge. Did she fear the dampness for her feet, or the darkness of the shadows for her heart?

In the dim light of the fairy lamps Van Ingen took her up in his arms and carried her to a couple of chairs in the shadow. He trembled a little as he put her down gently, and his old tyrannical, barbaric love for her swept over him like a wave out of a smooth sea.

From the doorway Sarah saw him. No one else did, for Miss Egerton blocked the view—shoulders were worn wide that year. She turned so sternly that her partner asked her what was wrong.

"Not the ice," replied she. "It was very good. I am thinking of the proverb: 'Better a living dog than a dead lion.'"

"What do you mean by it?" asked the bewildered man.

"I mean that it is better to risk everything to find out that the lion you worship is dead than it is to worship him as a live, far-away king with whom you lived in the past. Most men—most lions—sign their own death warrant, because no lion can live and be good in a cage."

"You mean they bite their keepers?" said the man.

"Exactly," she assented. "And then one loves one's own dear, good dog again."

"A pet lion often leaves a scar," with a laugh. "He gets too affectionate, he—"

"Oh, no, he can't!" interrupted Sarah. Perhaps she was chilly, for

she shuddered as she continued her reflections to herself.

"Jane can keep her head," thought she. "Van Ingen always was peculiar. He was too unselfish ages ago, and unselfishness in a man is usually inspired by poverty in the girl. Therefore he will probably be selfish now; he will believe that he has never forgotten his love for Jane. And as he takes love in long draughts, just as he takes his excursions into the wild places of the earth with all his strength, there'll be trouble."

Van Ingen did not ask Mrs. Osborne any questions, though she had been dreading them. He had heard about her from Lady Jane Mandeville, and did not want to be told the details of the past. That past concerned her husband, not him.

V

"ARE these all the letters?" Jane looked at the one maid with her lovely smile.

"Yes, m'm. The two gentlemen who called—" The maid hesitated almost stupidly, though she was not at all a stupid girl. It was only that she had never imagined anyone so beautiful as her new mistress looked to-day. It was not Mrs. Wilton's clothes—they were plain enough, nor her hat—which was not, but herself. Her rose-and-white smile, the soft starriness of her eyes, her radiance that seemed to light the dingy little narrow passage. "She was good-looking when she engaged me," thought the dazed Adams, "but she's a thousand times more so now." Then she realized that she had stopped in the middle of a sentence. "They were very sorry not to find you at home," she ended, hastily.

"You said—?"

"Yes, m'm. As you told me."

Mrs. Wilton nodded.

"Then tea, please, Adams," and she followed Sarah into the microscopic drawing-room. It looked very unused for the abode of a fortnight, and this rather struck Jane. "We

ought to get more settled looking, really," she said. "You know, Sarah, we've been here long enough."

Sarah made no answer, but stretched herself on the solid sofa with a reckless display of faultless shoes. "Jane, will you ever forget The Cedars' farewell? Colonel Wilton's ponderous growls in the background were really like distant thunder. How could you be so brave as to leave? I should have wept and remained."

"It was I supplied the lightning," grimly. "Don't think about it," and she recklessly pushed her best bodice into a drawer too small for it.

Across the garden were other flats in other high brick mansions, and ever since the imposing arrival of two smart young women and wonderful dressing bags at No. 16, Rossetti Mansions, a lady with an opera glass had been engaged in staring in at their windows from the flat opposite. Sarah observed her with disapproval.

"I shall give that old person something to see," she said, and lit a cigarette in front of the window with a joy only marred by being unable to see the countenance behind the opera glasses. "What was in the letters?" she inquired, suddenly.

"Nothing. Just settling for tonight, and sorry to have missed us when they called. It's lucky they write more letters about themselves than Horace Walpole, or they might have gone on missing us. I could have borne it," drily, "if they had stayed with Amelia."

Sarah's lip straightened.

"I think they'll be refreshing," she said, just as drily. "At all events, they have come up, and as we have to dine with them we may as well think we like it. Perhaps you'd rather be dining with Royalty, but I wouldn't. Give me my little amusements."

Jane chuckled. Somehow it was very funny—Jane Wilton coupled with Royalty.

"No, I wouldn't, for that would please the Wiltons. They'd be much angrier at my dining in a restaurant with their sacred Hopkins. Oh, it's

past seven! Come and dress. It will take indecent haste to get us into Charles street by a quarter-past eight."

It took such a flying departure, indeed, that neither lady observed the trifling fact that every denizen of the flats was observing their exit with deep interest. Jane had taken a suburban flat, thinking it would be more retired, quieter. She had made no allowance for suburban curiosity. The neighbors gazed with disapproval at Jane's curled head and Sarah's high-heeled shoes as they disappeared into the hansom. A man standing at the nearest point of vantage caught the name of the restaurant where they were dining, flung out in Jane's high, sweet voice as she drove off, and he whistled to the empty air.

Meanwhile the unconscious dames drove on joyfully. How shocked, how ill would their relations be if they could only see them!

"And what have you been doing?" inquired the ambrosially arrayed O'Hara at dinner. "You ought to have done all sorts of things in this fortnight. Have you been asked about much? Or do you want to be? Would you go to the Duchess of Aston's dance if I got cards?"

"West Kensington flats aren't asked to duchesses." Jane laughed her lovely laugh as she said it. "No, no! Don't get us cards for anything. We'd rather just dine quietly with you and Mr. Hopkins." The heart of Hopkins bounded. "When you go to the Duchess's we will sit quietly in our suburb and imagine you."

"You'll have to imagine very hard. I sha'n't go where you are not going. As for Hopkins, he never goes out."

Something like relief lighted Mrs. Wilton's eyes.

"Bores me," said Mr. Hopkins. "Tired of their old beauties and don't want to be of their new ones—all paint and French dressmaker!" He looked at Jane's clean cheek and sweetly simple little gown. "Though there's the usual story this year.

They say—well, they say she's a revelation! But I don't believe it."

The azalea face his eyes were on paled a little. With the Background in town and "entertaining largely," Mrs. George Wilton, who could never go to his parties, had perhaps no desire to hear of the woman who could.

"I'm told she really is exquisite—" O'Hara was a great man for justice. "I must meet her! The new American millionaire is running her. At least, the millionaire's supposed to have discovered her, though he keeps mightily in the background and swears he hardly knows her."

Only Sarah knew what sick apprehension made the quick coldness in Jane's voice.

"What's her name?" she said. She drank cold water thirstily. The Background must love a woman if he would lie for her. It made her murderous to think of any other woman's lips at his.

"Name? Osborne, Mrs. Osborne. She— What's the matter?"

Mrs. Wilton had dropped her glass, and the sister thought she could see her heart leaping under the crêpe bodice.

"Mrs. Osborne! Is *she* your new beauty? Why," with a laugh of wild relief, of pleasure, for the Background was welcome to a woman like Mrs. Osborne, "she's not a beauty at all! I don't call her even good-looking. She's as made up as ever she can be—certainly not worth while going out of your way to see."

Mr. Hopkins hid a smile in champagne. His beloved was so womanly with her guesswork "made up." Mr. O'Hara was bewildered.

"But you haven't seen her." He was too polite to say it was unlikely she ever would.

Jane had the loveliest laugh in the world, the laugh of a beautiful mouth that does not care if you see every tooth in it.

"Seen her!" she cried. "Why, I know her. So does Sarah. She's a relation of ours, though she has never had much to do with us. But she's going to be of the greatest use to us

while we're in town. Oh, I dare say men," scornfully, "might call her a beauty! She always has shoals of them about. I saw her to-day. She was going to meet the Duke of Cornwall at dinner to-night."

Mr. Hopkins was perturbed. Shoals of men and Royalty were no surroundings for his sweet, simply mannered Jane.

"Dear me!" said he, "will you see her often?" He scented danger for his schemes of possessive dinners, of protective theatre parties. Instead, would he have to call, to dine, to scour London in the wake of the relation of the beauty?

"Very often." Jane spoke firmly. "When my 'in-laws' come up to town and want us to go to them, I shall always be going to Mrs. Osborne's. You see, we have very few friends in town, and Mrs. Osborne will be convenient."

"Has she a husband?" Mr. Hopkins's voice was hollow. The husbands of beauties were always fast or drunken. He trembled for his Jane.

"He's dead," she said, shortly. "There are Mrs. Osborne and her father-in-law, old Mr. Osborne; and his son, Mr. Howard K. Osborne, on a visit from Boston, U. S.; and that is all. Old Mr. Osborne and Mr. Howard are going to take us wherever we want to go. Mrs. Osborne won't want us to bore her. And I—sometimes I am afraid she bores Sarah a little."

"I see," said O'Hara, stiffly. "Are they—nice? They sound—charming;" sarcastic effort all over him.

"Very nice," returned Sarah. She had taken no notice of Jane's last sentence. She was looking her prettiest, her curly hair shining golden in the pink-enwrapped light—"amber dropping" hair, Mr. O'Hara, being susceptible, had fondly called it to Mr. Hopkins. Many men were susceptible where Sarah was concerned. "Can't you understand?" Her little teeth showed white between her fresh lips. "The Osborne men relations do not exist. We

have invented them, so that we could give names and dates to the Wiltons. There is really only Mrs. Osborne, and she has me to lunch and gets done with me. I," with ungodly pride, "invented her men relations."

"No! You didn't really!" O'Hara was filled with admiration. "Let me be Mr. Howard K. Osborne, of Boston, U. S. I can be such a good American! What a pity," with feeling, "that the Wiltons know me! If only you could introduce me as Mr. Howard K. Osborne."

"You would spoil it all," said Jane, with decision. "Mr. Hopkins is to be old Mr. Osborne—to the Wiltons."

Mr. Hopkins remembered sharply that he was thirty-nine. He made an effort to smile.

"It's simply splendid!" the correctly languid O'Hara spluttered with rapture.

"Gorgeous!" echoed the old Mr. Osborne, faintly. Then with a flash of manly insight: "Whenever you say you are going to the Osbornes, you will come somewhere with us."

"Oh, no," returned Jane, with crushing candor, "not at all. It is to cover up our going where we choose that we have created the Osbornes—*père et fils*. Whenever we do not want my relatives we shall say we are going to the Osbornes."

Sarah yawned.

"We are going home now," she announced. "We are tired."

VI

"JANE!" said Sarah, shaking the calmly sleeping form, "Jane!"

Jane started up, justly exasperated.

"Good heavens, what a vice you have for early rising! What's the matter? And a wet morning, too! You might let me sleep on a wet morning."

"The bath won't run. And you never could have looked at this flat; there isn't any dining-room."

"Well, I knew that. We aren't ever going to dine here, so what would be the good of one? There's a sweet kitchen with rows of white china and a gas stove," severely.

"Oh," said Sarah, darkly. "Well, I've had a bath." She enveloped herself in a blue silk garment and departed, leaving Jane's nose once more buried in the bolster.

After all, it was a cheerful novelty to breakfast in a kitchen, and a gas stove made excellent toast. It was not so very hot in the kitchen, if you kept the window and the door open and sat between them. Miss Egerton encouraged her outraged maid to pour her a third cup of coffee. That damsel was convinced that her mistresses were mad, but she, at least, would be primly sane. She stood behind Miss Egerton's chair with a bearing of pomp suited to a banquet hall, but bursting with intelligence.

"If you please, Miss Egerton," as Sarah looked up for fresh toast, "do you think this flat is *respectable*?" The dark meaning was lost on Sarah.

"No. No flat is respectable," calmly, "without a dining-room. Why, Adams?" For the face of the factotum was portentous.

"Well, Miss Egerton, last night I took a walk in the garden after you went out, and I heard them all wondering who we could be. 'Three pretty young women,' one man was saying as I passed; the ignorant wretch had no idea," with a conscious smirk, "as how I'm your maid."

"Even that couldn't make you ugly, Adams. Is that all?"

"No, Miss Egerton, it's not! The window across from mine in the next flat looks straight into my bedroom, and a horrid man sat in it all the evening and stared in at me. And when I got up after you had come in, to see that the door was locked, there he still was, glaring in, and me in my nightdress."

"Don't look out of the window," practically. "I hear Mrs. Wilton calling, Adams."

"Hear me calling! I should think

so." A wrathful apparition stood in the doorway, swathed in white. "The bath won't run out; it's full of gallons of cold water where you had your bath."

"I told you so."

"You said it wouldn't run. I thought you meant the cold-water tap, and I didn't care, because I always use hot water. But it won't run out, and I want my breakfast."

"Dip it out then."

"If you had the Christian habit of hot baths it would have run. Hot water," crossly, "will always run. This flat is perfectly beastly!"

"There is a sweet kitchen with rows of white china and a gas stove."

But Jane was gone, and sounds of woe and dipping were rising from the bathroom. The early riser determined to persist in vice.

In the morning they went shopping in the long roads of Suburbia, because Jane said they were poor. Sarah ruined her skirt in climbing up and down from the tops of omnibuses, and Jane got her feet wet. They lunched at a ladies' restaurant, because Jane vowed nervously that someone she knew might be at Prince's—Jane Wilton, who knew six people in London! Sarah gave way to unbecoming language when she found she could have nothing to drink but tea or coffee. They had coffee, and they expended ten shillings. Jane paid the bill morosely.

"No more ladies' restaurants," she said, grimly, as she squelched with wet feet into the inside of an omnibus, for it was raining like Niagara. She explained as they rumbled toward the flat that having ruined their boots, it was not worth while to pay for a hansom too late to save them. Sarah knew it was for quite another reason. There is no shelter like an omnibus for uncured and dowdy wetness.

Mr. Hopkins and Mr. O'Hara had been advised that to come to tea would be useless, but they had sent a humble telegram suggesting dinner at the Carlton; they had even been so fearful of disappointment as to

come to convey their divinities thither. But Jane insisted on an Italian restaurant in Oxford street. She said she disliked Prince's, the Carlton and the Cecil.

After dinner Mr. O'Hara beseeched them to come on somewhere. He murmured of the Palace. Mr. Hopkins frowned sternly. He felt himself responsible, especially for Jane, who was the prettier.

"I assure you, my dear chap, they wouldn't like it." He was very protective. "We might go to the Grosvenor Club if you like, or to see Irving. I've a box."

Jane was remarkably tired; also, she loathed theatres and clubs.

"Get two hansoms and we'll go home," she commanded. "You may come in for five minutes."

She had meant one hansom for herself and Sarah, but Mr. Hopkins was too quick for her.

"Oh, you're going with Billy," he said, sweetly, to the less divine Sarah, and he leaped nimbly in beside Jane. But when they arrived at Rossetti Mansions there was no second hansom behind them.

"Sarah must be here," said Jane, as they entered the fourth-story flat after a weary climb. But Sarah was not there. Hopkins did not repine.

"This is very nice," he observed, when he was in the drawing-room. He had been appalled at the narrow darkness of the entry. "The stairs are a little steep, though."

"We don't mind them. You are getting old," returned the practical Jane. "You would never guess who lives in the flat below us."

She pulled up the blinds to let in the cool night air, and the modest interior was plainly visible to the dwellers opposite as Sarah came in, followed by O'Hara. The lady with the opera glass hung breathless from her balcony.

"Well, O'Hara, you have been quick." Mr. Hopkins wore a meaning smirk.

"Where have you been?"

"All over town in a hansom." Sarah was pink and fresh from the

night breeze. "We thought of going to supper, but we weren't hungry enough. What is Mr. Hopkins looking so perturbed about?"

"I want to know who lives below you." Hopkins did not approve of the flat, it being too far from St. James's street, where he lived. He had also had suspicions ever since he set foot on the stairs of Rossetti Mansions.

"Why do you want to know?"

"Because Mrs. Wilton says it is somebody."

"Of course it's somebody, and you probably know all about her," returned Jane, cheerfully. "It's Winnie Wellwood."

"Not *the* Winnie? the music-hall Winnie? the Duke's Winnie?" Hopkins sat appalled.

"Yes."

"Then it won't do for you to stay here. O'Hara, do you hear this?"

"What a lark!" O'Hara was not appalled. "Is she in now?"

"What a lark!! My good chap, these ladies can't stay here. It can't be respectable if they let that woman a flat."

"Oh!" The gravity of the situation dawned on O'Hara, even while he composed his countenance with difficulty. His eyes twinkled. "Fancy Winnie here! I suppose she has changed a lot," regretfully. "She used to be great fun."

Hopkins frowned.

"You must let us get you another flat, Mrs. Wilton. What would your husband say if he knew?"

Mrs. Wilton took a rapid survey of some pages in her George's past. When he and the Duke had lived together in Charlotte street, Winnie had—but no matter. Besides, the rent was paid.

"Another flat?" She skipped the question with masterly alacrity. "Of course not! Winnie won't hurt us. It's not catching."

"Move again!" Sarah was agonized with suppressed laughter. "Not till I have to. Winnie won't eat us. She—she won't see enough of us."

Jane interrupted hastily.

"Our maid says her brougham comes for her every night at nine and brings her home at all hours."

"Here's a carriage!" O'Hara was quite excited. He rushed Mr. Hopkins to the window.

"Hush!" growled the virtuous Hopkins, sternly, as Jane and Sarah gave way to wild laughter at the spectacle of the two correct adorers reclining recklessly on the balcony, their heads hanging over the railing and their feet dangling in the room. "Hush, don't make a noise! It's Winnie!"

The world had not been going well with Miss Wellwood, and she had been swamping sorrow. Jane and Sarah were craning from their bedroom window. Below, Miss Wellwood was grabbing at the railings for support and addressing her coachman in unknown tongues.

"Don't listen!" commanded Mr. Hopkins, hastily, leaning well out to adjure the bedroom window. "Don't!"

The anguish in his voice overcame Mrs. Wilton. She laughed till the clear, sweet sound of it fell to the street below. Winnie stopped in her unsteady career and gazed upward, half-drunk and all-malignant, at the four silhouettes against the lighted windows. Her music-hall yell carried:

"I s'pose you laugh because you've been luckier than me!" and she pointed at the two men.

Mr. Hopkins shot back into the drawing-room, disgustedly brushing himself with black and grimy hands till his hostesses appeared again. He had much to say, but Jane cut him short. She was a little pale. That raucous voice had somehow threatened disaster.

"You must go home now," she said, wearily; "we are sleepy."

"Oh, not yet." O'Hara was suddenly sad. "I am just beginning to feel happy."

"You can feel happy in the cab."

So with regret and solemnity the adorers departed. The lights were out in the passage, and they had to

cling closely to the banisters as they slowly stumbled down stairs.

"Did you impress on them that they couldn't come again for a week?"

Jane looked years younger as the door shut on them. She had forgotten all about Winnie.

"I did," morosely. "I—I shall rather miss them."

But Mrs. George Wilton only gazed radiantly at her reflection as she took the pins out of her hair. After all, it was very easy to "lam a loose," and Mrs. Osborne was very useful and easy to manage.

"I'm sorry I said she was made up," she murmured, repentantly, to her glass; "so ungrateful!" And she laughed just as Sarah had laughed when the freedom of the flat dawned on her.

VII

MRS. OSBORNE came late to the Duchess of Aston's dance, the dance that the Hon. William Craven O'Hara had scorned because Miss Sarah Egerton refused cards for it. It was rather a pity, since thus he could have triumphantly disproved Mrs. George Wilton's slurs on her smart relation. Yes, Mrs. Osborne was beautiful. To know it you had only to look at the women's faces of dark envy, of blank wretchedness, as she passed by them. There was youth in her exquisite grace, but there was no simplicity. She was exotic, fine, strangely sumptuous and unmodern; her face a face that might have smiled on dead men out of Circe's window in strange lands long ago; cut exquisitely, as to show the gods what a woman's face could be. The color of it was like azalea flowers, creaming into the pink that is the pink of dawn, not of roses. She carried her brown head high, with a curious backward loll of it on a flawless throat, and under her slow lids shone the eyes of a woman to whom the world is very young.

At least a man who knew her thought so. The woman next him was only wondering why Mrs. Osborne

was not looking radiant triumph and provocation at the gathering cloud of men. Also, if that plain brown were beautiful in hair, it was a pity it cost two guineas a week to keep hers Titian red.

"What?" She was absent enough to be irritable, but hastily recovered herself. "Perfectly exquisite, is she not?"

"A woman whose mouth is scarlet and not crimson goes far," murmured the man who had been thinking of Circe, and promptly he went far himself—to Mrs. Osborne's very elbow. Her foamy skirts, that were gold-threaded lace on dawn-yellow chiffon, on something pale flame under that, brushed his foot. The cost of them would have kept Jane Wilton in West Kensington for a month. The faint, keen scent from them pleased the man, just as did the ineffable smartness, the grace and air of their wearer. His face was impassive, chilly, as she turned and saw him.

"There's no supper yet," she said, with a laugh. "I wonder why." Her face was lovely as she laughed, even if the sorceress look in it was intensified.

Everyone else laughed, too.

"Ask the Duke," said a man.

"Is he more truthful than his equerry? I," placidly, "don't like equeries."

"He's more patient," said the equerry, slowly. "To-night, at least, he's waited an hour."

"Oh, not for me! Nobody ever waits for me," serenely. But the equerry was gone.

Royalty, simple-mannered and rather injured, was at her side. Mrs. Osborne liked Royalty, who was a gentleman, as all Royalties are not. She smiled as she went away with him, looked her loveliest as she sat beside him at a table where even the Duchess ceased from troubling. If the marvel of her eyes was on a hawk-faced man across the room, no one knew it—particularly the man.

Yet when the Duke was gone he was unostentatiously beside her, and he laughed as she spoke tranquilly.

"Once round the room," said Mrs. Osborne. No one would have known she had dressed and come just to waltz once round the Duchess's ballroom in Van Ingen's arms.

His shoulder was like iron under her hand, his coat so near to her cheek the dearest thing in the world, his strong, easy hold of her—dear God! to have had his arm forever between her and all others! She made him stop, because the sharp thought hurt her.

"In here," he said. The room was empty. "Now sit down and let me look at you. I get the most awful feeling every now and then that you are a dream, and that I'm going to wake up."

"If you want to wake!" said Mrs. Osborne. A childish gaiety lighted her eyes. "It's too funny," she said. "You and I, who were nobodies, poor nobodies—once!"

"You were always a princess." He had a trick of throwing back his head and smiling, his keen eyes very sweet.

Mrs. Osborne's laugh was as young as Jane Wilton's own.

"What! When you used to come to Aunt Adela's by the back gate before breakfast, and had to run all the way home to get past the other houses before they woke up? I had two hideous cotton frocks she made me wear, black with white dots on them. No one could look like a princess in white dots."

"I wish I'd got up earlier and run more!" sharply. "I wish the ship that took me away from you had never sailed. Do you know how I've always remembered you? In one of those cotton frocks, kneeling down and picking strawberries. I came behind you. You didn't expect me."

"Oh, no!" She made no pretense of having forgotten. "I didn't expect you. I was caught. I was all over strawberries. I could have cried."

"You were like a princess dressed up. It was no surprise to me when I found you like this. I knew you'd marry. If I hadn't, I—I think I

should have gone back to look for you."

Mrs. Osborne's hand pressed her fan a little.

"Would you prefer the cotton frock?" she said, languidly.

"No, you were made for this! If I had gone back——"

"It might have been to find you'd lost your taste for cotton."

"It's all the same. It's you."

Somehow Mrs. Osborne remembered what time it was.

"And—me—is going home," she said, gaily.

"Do you know that I——" he rose because she did—"I never danced with you in those days? I made a vow I'd never dance again till I had the girl of my heart in my arms."

"Girls are out of fashion," observed Mrs. Osborne, sweetly. She had seen her hostess's frock in the doorway, within earshot.

"I've kept the vow, all the same," he returned, under his breath.

It was the Duke of Aston who put Mrs. Osborne in her carriage. When she drove away in the May dawn no one could have thought her impassive, indifferent to success. She put down both windows, drank the wine-sweet air avidly, wide-nostriled, full of pride. Her face was wicked with triumph. She, who had picked strawberries in her aunt's garden in a hideous cotton frock, had taken the town by storm; had kept the heir to the throne waiting till it pleased her to arrive; had the desire of her eyes, the love of her heart within reach, when she chose to put out her hand. It was for this that she was mad with joy. No matter what happened, she would never let him go—while he wanted her! And she laughed. She was sure of him. Poor Jane Wilton, with her white frocks, and her Background! But Jane Wilton was no actress, perhaps, and carried her head a little forward as Nature put it, and let her crimson lips alone. Mrs. Osborne of the scarlet lips would have the kisses that Jane had never forgotten.

With money and unerring taste even a furnished house in Eaton Place may be made soft-colored and individual, a dimly gorgeous setting to the loveliest thing in it. Mrs. Osborne's house was that, and more. Against silks thick with silver embroidery, satins worked by cloistered nuns for princesses, faint-colored like sunsets and pale dawns, she shone starlike in her drawing-room; against brocade hangings, the spoils of forgotten palaces, she sat at her dinner table. But for her bedroom she did not care. It was as its owner left it, hideous, frankly English; so far, the only room in the house that did not matter. She woke up in it, and laughed as she saw that her companion had brought the chocolate, instead of her maid.

"I had a gorgeous time!" she said. "I nearly woke you up to tell you of it. Oh, why don't you go about with me?"

The companion laughed.

"I'm saving money. You said so yourself the other day. Here's the paper, all about you! And the Ladies' Letter in the *World* says that 'to be a Beauty it is apparently only necessary to do one's hair low and wear green shoes.' I told you someone would spot those shoes. Do look at the invitations. How shall I answer them? Oh, and Lady Alderney says she'll be delighted to present you at the Drawing Room!"

"I've no doubt she would," with vigor. "It would take more than delight to get me to Court," chuckling. "I'm—too American to spend such a dull morning. I'll accept all the nice things, though. Lady Lanark's dinner dance—I must go there. Miles Van Ingen's river party, of course. I wish you'd come—he said to bring you. Three balls, good houses, too; two invitations for Ascot week—they can wait. I don't," thoughtfully, "want to crowd every day till I can't turn round. What's that?"

A telegram lay, flimsy and ugly, among the smart notes.

"It was among what I got last

night. I didn't show it to you. It's for Saturday week," cheerfully.

"I don't care two straws," said Mrs. Osborne, deliberately. She scribbled a list of engagements on the back of a card. "On Saturday week you and I are going to—Hastings. Nothing can interfere with that. You can 'unavoidable absence from town' all these. They're nearly all dull. But these—" she had put six invitations together neatly—"I'll manage these. I," composedly, "will dovetail them in."

They were all places where Miles Van Ingen was going.

VIII

THE flat looked grubby to Mrs. George Wilton as she came in. Sarah, very heartlessly gay in her best tea gown, pitchforked a letter across the placid tea table into her sister's unwilling hand.

"Another despatch," she said. "That makes five, counting the telegram."

Jane tore it open, groaned and read aloud.

DEAR JANE: We hope to arrive in town this afternoon and are looking forward to seeing you to-morrow. Will you go to our rooms (95, Cromwell road) and give our landlady a few last directions? Tell her we shall want dinner at seven, soup, fish, whiting or haddock—six small ones, Jane—be sure you mention six, and small. They must be about the size of a herring, and she is to fry them. Order a nice vegetable—cauliflowers are good, especially at night after a long journey. We like a plain pudding, as I have to be careful what I eat. Will you order stewed prunes?—Colonel Wilton likes them. And a pennyworth of fresh cream for me. Order a fourpenny loaf of bread. On Sunday I have in the morning two tumblerfuls of new milk, and two pennyworth of cream to last till the afternoon. She must get the same quantity fresh in the evening. Now, my dearest Jane, I am,

With much love,

Yours affectionately,

ISABELLA WILTON.

"Do buy them a cow," said Sarah, crossly. "It would save so much calculation."

"We shall have to lunch with them to-morrow," Jane announced, forlornly.

"But not dine. I will not dine there on Sunday night. We are dining with the Osbornes. Will dearest Amelia be with them?"

"Of course. And I meant to have had such a nice Sunday!" wailed Jane.

"Well, don't let's go near them."

"We must; at least I must. There's a postscript that they expect us at luncheon."

"I shall read the *Pink 'Un* in bed before I go, and tell all the anecdotes. There was a nice one last week about town Sundays."

But even the bold Sarah's heart sank as they entered the respectable lodgings that the Wilton family gilded by the name of residential hotel. Up stairs the sisters toiled, up and up again, till Sarah was breathless in her best corset.

"Do they live on the roof?" she demanded, stopping so suddenly that Jane nearly fell over her, thereby causing an unseemly noise.

"Sh! This is the door."

Sarah sailed in behind Jane's train, not the same Sarah who was to be seen at Rossetti Mansions, all laughter and sweet youthfulness, but a pale Sarah, with a hard-set lip. She held up her head determinedly, and avoided the Wilton embraces with a hand pushed stiffly out before her. Jane, alas! dared not so fortify herself. Each and every Wilton kissed her with effusion.

"Now that we have arrived," said Mrs. Wilton, kindly, "you will be able to go out a little. I dare say you have found that London is a very dull place when one knows no one." She could say "I told you so" to Jane's independence, even if she could not crush it.

"Dull? Oh, no, I don't think we have been exactly dull." Jane's eyes were guileless and her smile truly childlike.

"I suppose you have done a great deal of shopping," Amelia said, with some envy, though she assured herself as she said it that Jane's pale-pink muslin and Alençon lace were not pretty at all—there was no stiff collar. "You have on a very peculiar bodice, and surely those are new pearls?"

"Are they?" carelessly. "I almost forget what I have bought."

Mrs. Wilton looked alarmed.

"I hope you are not spending too much, my dear. George—"

"Oh, I never take any money from George," calmly. "He has his and I have mine. I should hate taking money from my husband."

Colonel Wilton grunted an approving grunt. Would that he had trained his Isabella to such heights!

Isabella sat knitting furiously.

"Really, Jane," she said, with a vexed laugh, "you stick at nothing. It sounds quite improper to speak of money and your husband like that. Pray remember Evelyn and Amelia."

"And Sarah," lightly. "But my improper sentiments can't corrupt them, since they haven't any husbands."

"Sarah is looking a very bad color—" being routed, Mrs. Wilton attacked in a new place—"and very thin."

Sarah grew scarlet.

"Green blinds," she said, determined to be calm. "They make us all look frightful."

"No, I think it is perhaps that your frock is too trying for you."

But Sarah did not respond. With her other ear she heard Colonel Wilton engaging Jane, who had let them know that she had gone to see Mrs. Patrick Campbell.

Mrs. Wilton also had heard.

"I hope you did not go alone, Jane."

"Oh, no." Jane settled herself more comfortably in her uncomfortable chair and carefully avoided Sarah's eye.

"Who went with you?"

"I did not know you had any Lon-

don friends." Thus Evelyn and Amelia.

"Neither have we—many."

Jane paused, and Sarah sat appalled. What was the matter with her? Had she lost her wits?

"Jane went with the Osbornes," she put in, briskly. "You remember my having a note from Mrs. Osborne at The Cedars?"

"With Mrs. Osborne and old Mr. Osborne and Mr. Howard K. Osborne, his son. He has lived so much in America!"

Jane gave the catalogue slowly.

"That is no reason he should take up their odious customs, I should think," Mrs. Wilton remarked, icily. "Mr. Howard K. Osborne! He must be most objectionable!"

"I don't think you would find him so," sweetly. "I think he looks a little like Mr. O'Hara."

Sarah gave a frightened start. This was really too wild.

"Mrs. Osborne is a relation of ours," she said, hurriedly. "The Osbornes are American, you know."

"So I should have supposed."

"Did you like the play?" inquired Amelia.

"I liked Mrs. Pat."

"Mrs.—? oh, Mrs. Patrick Campbell! You speak very flippantly, Jane. Did you sit beside Mrs. Osborne? I hope you are always very careful to sit beside her. It looks so much more modest."

"I sat between old Mr. Osborne and Mr. Howard K. Osborne," said Sarah, frantically, for there was an evil light in Mrs. George Wilton's eye.

"Osborne? Ha, I don't know any Osbornes now! I did once, though. Where do these people come from? Isabella, I wish you'd ring for luncheon," shouted Colonel Wilton.

Jane plunged wildly.

"Kalamazoo," she responded, to the annoyance of Sarah, who had meant to say Cohoes.

"What's his name—the father's?"

Now Jane had a fetish, and the fetish was a china dog of vile pottery, with a foolish smile and large blue

eyes. Since the age of three she had possessed it, and wherever she went the china dog went also.

His name? Suddenly the name of the fetish occurred to her. She cast a stern glance at Sarah.

"Mr. Osborne's Christian name is Reginald Adolphus," she said, blandly.

And then the image of the true Reginald Adolphus, with his spotty china coat, his spaniel ears and his collie tail, presented itself too vividly to her mental vision. She began to laugh helplessly.

"It is—it is such a funny name!" she gasped between her hysterical chuckles, wiping the tears from her eyes.

"Funny! I don't think it's funny!" snorted Colonel Wilton. "Very ordinary I call it. Isabella, I want my lunch."

"You would think it was funny if you saw him," retorted Jane.

Sarah rose hastily and looked out of the window. The amiable china smile of Reginald Adolphus had occurred to her also. But Jane was too reckless; they would be getting into trouble if she went on like this. She feared the worst during luncheon. No matter how hard pressed one may be at luncheon, it is impossible to rise and fly to the window to hide a too ingenuous countenance.

"I have tickets for the Albert Hall this afternoon," Mrs. Wilton announced as she carved the orthodox hot roast beef. "Your tickets, Jane, came to four shillings."

"Oh, I am afraid we can't go! That is, I haven't any money." Jane was off her guard and pattered weakly.

"It would be a pity for you to miss the chance of hearing a little good music," Mrs. Wilton pursued. "You can owe it to me. There are always such nice ballads at the Albert Hall on Sundays, about shipwrecks and the sea and prayers—quite religious. I am so fond of sacred music!"

Sarah glared rebelliously at Jane. But Jane was hungry, and was eating roast beef and boiled potatoes as if she liked them.

"Thank heaven, I have on my

best corset!" reflected Sarah, angrily. "I couldn't feel hungry if I were starving." She looked distastefully at the waxy boiled potato, the overdone beef on her plate.

"I think, mamma dear, I had better lend Jane a bonnet, or at least a toque. A young married woman can hardly go to the Albert Hall, on a Sunday, in a large hat."

Jane, too stupefied for speech, gazed at Evelyn.

"What is the matter with my hat?" she demanded at last.

"It is a little—well," Mrs. Wilton nodded portentously, "Evelyn is quite right, my dear Jane. You can borrow her traveling toque to wear. And really, Jane, I consider so thick a veil *fast*! One would think you did not want to be recognized."

Jane clutched her headgear with both hands.

"Thank you, I will go as I am," she said, "or there is no need for us to go at all."

"But that would be a waste—the tickets are paid for." To pay for anything and then not use it, even if it were abhorrent, was out of Mrs. Wilton's range of vision. "And perhaps no one will notice your hat. But you must really get a nice, quiet little bonnet to wear when you go about with us."

"I think," observed Jane, very slowly and politely, "I shall not require that bonnet." But the point was wasted on her relatives.

"We shall be engaged a great deal this week," Sarah put in, firmly. "Mrs. Osborne has come to London to—see a doctor. And he says she must go about everywhere and be amused. It is absolutely necessary for her to be amused. So we are dining with her and going on somewhere every night this week."

Mrs. Wilton finished her custard pudding, then rose majestically.

"Go and get ready, girls," she commanded. "It is something of a walk from here to the Albert Hall."

Sarah gazed doubtfully at her high heels. She wore them conscientiously, in order to look as tall as Jane.

Could she ever totter in them all that way, even at Mrs. Wilton's pace? Jane thought of the streets she must traverse in a squadron of Wiltons. Even with a thick veil . . .

"Why not drive?" she inquired.

"I do not approve of driving on Sunday. It is a day of rest for man and beast. Besides, cabs are exorbitant."

"We can go in an omnibus."

"Omnibus!" Mrs. Wilton's fat hands really flew up in the air with horror. "How could I, in my Position, be seen in an omnibus? You forget one owes a certain duty to one's County. I hope," grandiloquently, "you and Sarah never go in omnibuses. I could never hold up my head again if anyone saw you."

"Mr. Hopkins and Mr. O'Hara are in town. You would not like them to see you getting out of an omnibus!" said Evelyn, cuttingly.

"Oh, I don't know!" muttered the godless Sarah. "We haven't wooden legs—or English ankles! I think," her mind reverted rapidly to the surroundings in which she was accustomed to meet one at least of the desirable bachelors referred to—the cheerful restaurants, the pink lights, the flower-scented drawing-room at the flat—"I think we are not at all likely to meet Mr. Hopkins and Mr. O'Hara—in an omnibus!" And Sarah chuckled as she stepped carefully down the stairs in her high heels.

Mrs. Wilton remained behind.

"Do hurry, mamma," called Evelyn, primly. "We shall be late."

"It was your father. I was obliged to stop to put away his walking sticks. He *will* carry one, though an umbrella is so much more suitable on a Sunday," and she sailed serenely onward. Jane looked at Sarah. At least they would not be there to hear the torrents of bad language with which Colonel Wilton would start for his club, supporting his gouty footsteps by the family umbrella. It was the only drop spilled out of Jane's brimming cup of woe.

IX

MISS EGERTON was dull. She had so snubbed Mr. O'Hara that he had retired in dudgeon. Jane was away, the society of Adams was not festive, and to avoid owning to herself a sneaking sorrow for the dismissal of the faithful, Miss Egerton arrayed herself and went out. It was three when she set forth, it was seven when she returned. If she had been preoccupied when she opened the door, she was jovial when she beheld Jane, whom she had not expected, awaiting her in elegant leisure and her oldest tea gown.

"I had a heavenly day," was that lady's greeting.

"Had you? Oh, never mind! I'm glad you're back, though. Where do you think I've been? And whom do you think I met?"

"Don't know. You look very smart. Have you got on any of my clothes?"

"Only your wedding ring," carelessly. "And very useful it was. Oh, you must know whom I met! It was the luckiest thing I went out."

"What!" Jane sat up from her elegant position on the sofa. "Not Urmston, Sarah? What did you do?"

"Urmston, exactly; and I didn't do anything. I said, 'How do you do?' and, well—I routed him!"

"Did he ask you where I was?" said Jane, curiously. "Was that why he wanted routing?"

Sarah winced, ever so faintly.

"No, he didn't. But oh, Jane, he knows the Wiltons. He knows we live here. He wanted to come and call."

"What did you say?" Jane was very white. The Wiltons could not be forbidden her flat any more than death or the baker's boy, but their emissaries she would not have. "How did you manage?"

"Beautifully," with a childlike smile. "He didn't catch my name that day at—Mrs. Osborne's." On that occasion he had been glued to her side with such an effect that it was the first and last time Miss Eger-

ton appeared in Mrs. Osborne's drawing-room. "I had borrowed your wedding ring for fun, and so," very cheerfully, "as he seemed to think I was married, I let him think so."

"But he'll find out!" Cold horror was in Jane's voice.

"Not he! He isn't half as tall as I thought he was, Jane, and he looked as if he had been *bleached* since I saw him."

"Good heavens!" said Jane, faintly. "Are you sure it was he?"

"Am I sure you are you? Listen. I met him at that new picture place, and he took me to have tea. I took off my gloves, and when he saw your ring he looked so surprised that I improved the occasion."

"What did you tell him your name was? I suppose," unkindly, "you drew the line at telling him you were the duchess of anything."

"That's where I managed so well. I didn't tell him anything. I talked a little about Captain Wilton, and I answered when he called me Mrs. Wilton."

"But why? What on earth made you pretend to be me? He'll meet you at the Wiltons'. You were mad."

"I was wise." Sarah looked at her sister significantly. "He—I—it's such an odd thing, Jane; quite inexplicable," gazing straight at her. "Last Thursday the Wiltons caught him in the Park and made him point out the celebrities. He did. And the Wiltons—well, it seemed to me that if he pined to set eyes on their daughter-in-law, he'd better do it at once!"

"But he'll see me at their house."

"Never goes there," sententiously. "Afraid of Amelia. Don't look at me like that. I tell you it was the only thing to do."

"But he'll come here!"

"He won't now; he would have. I terrified him with mamma-in-law. Also, why should he come when I'm going to meet him in the Park in the morning? The Wiltons," musingly, "only go there in the afternoons."

"Don't go—for me!" very pale. "He's 'kittle cattle to shoe behind.'"

"I must. Unless you'll put things straight yourself," slowly.

"I can't," said Jane, dully. "I'm playing for money, Sarah; and I thought it was for counters."

Sarah looked at her, and held her peace. But her choked-down answer stuck in her mind. She was playing for flesh and blood, and gallantly, if for a forlorn hope not her own. Jane's voice startled her.

"Does Urmston know—" it was the first time for days that she had said the name—"George?"

"No," shortly. "Not even that he's in India. The family were evidently pressed for time when they met him."

At one o'clock the next afternoon Lord Urmston discovered Sarah seated in the Park, a vision of diaphanous muslin, crowned with a large black hat and shaded by a faintly rosy parasol. He saw at once why the Wilton family had taken Mrs. Osborne for her. Her whole toilet was exactly what Mrs. Osborne had worn last Thursday, when the same parasol had shaded her face from her would-be relatives. His lordship felt the warm midday air heady as he looked at her. Sarah as she greeted him made certain that her preposterous heels were out of sight. She had not told Jane all about yesterday. She had had a horrible fright, had been driven indeed before she posed as her sister. But it had been a great success, and to-day's gown clinched it. Urmston as he sat down beside her was cursing himself for a short-sighted idiot. Who would ever have thought a Wilton daughter-in-law could have been like this, with sense enough to come out rather than make him run the gantlet of Wiltons at her flat? He decided never to mention her to her relatives, if he had the bad luck to come across them.

"I believe all the nice women in the world are married," he remarked, concisely.

Sarah had the grace to blush.

"I wonder if all the nice men are," she returned, thoughtfully; and she looked straight into his gray, self-

seeking eyes with her lucid blue gaze. There were friends of Sarah's who would have known that the look threatened stormy weather. Lord Urmston saw only a fair wind and set his spinnaker.

"You look charming this morning, and so happy. Tell me—" he was the sort of man who makes acquaintance intimacy if the woman be pretty—"are you happy?"

"I never was so happy in my life," composedly. Composure is a great addition to a lie.

He gave her a sudden glance.

"I wonder if you know what happiness is. I wish I could teach you."

Teach her! Sarah kept contempt off her lips. She had an instant's vision of another man's face, young and spare, of other eyes.

"What is happiness?" she said, dreamily.

"You are married to the man of your choice, and yet—you can ask!"

"I can ask." She looked at him.

"Can you answer?" She was thanking heaven it was not Urmston to whom she must look for happiness.

"Happiness? It is to be with the woman who charms you, whether you have her forever or for but a little time. It is to love as the Greeks loved, to—"

Sarah laughed. No one in all the world, not even Jane, had ever before heard her laugh like that. And when Urmston, wincing, looked sharply at her she was holding her slim throat very straight, and the set of it was merciless.

His head swam. The brown-green turf, the passing carriages, the women in their pale-colored gowns went before him like a dream in which the one thing real was Sarah. And she had laughed! She should pray before he was done with her. His upper lip went up; for just one second the white teeth, with the oddly wide division between the two in front, showed. But Sarah did not see. She was getting up, carefully keeping her pale-rose parasol between her pale-rose face and the sun.

"Let us go and have luncheon,"

she said, serenely. "Would you mind coming with me first to Jay's?"

There was an odd look on Lord Urmston's keen, eager face as he intimated that he was delighted to go to Jay's. But by the time they had reached Hyde Park corner another look reigned in its stead.

Ten minutes later a hansom was pulled up with a jerk in the middle of Regent street, thereby causing swift profanity from the driver of an omnibus whose horses nearly ran over it. A man in gentleman's clothes jumped out and imperiled them amid the traffic, swore viciously at a policeman who tried to stop him as he dived under the nose of a hansom horse, and disappeared between two omnibuses.

The driver of the hansom from which the man had fled peered down through the trap for orders, and a girl's voice said, wildly:

"Drive on—anywhere! No, Sloane street."

As the cab turned back into the stream Sarah sat in it trembling with fury. Was that what Urmston called conversation?—to say he adored her; to take it for granted she adored him, because, forsooth, she had met him by appointment; to propose she should go to Paris with him! "You have never been in Paris. Your husband will never know." It had been all she could do to speak. "My husband—no, he never will know," she had said, slowly. Then with her parasol she had pushed up the little window in the roof. "Stop—at once!" she had said. And looking straight at Urmston, "Get out of this hansom! Go!" Her voice had been high and steady. "Get out of my sight! I loathe you!" Jane or no Jane, dangerous or not, she would for once speak the truth to Lord Urmston. She had been playing the game so calmly he had never imagined this was coming. He had sat petrified with amazement. "Will you go? Or must I?" She had held her breath as she looked at him. And without one word, without his own volition, Lord Urmston had got up, had found him-

self standing in the roaring traffic, being cursed on all sides.

For once Sarah was wildly unhappy. She wept sick, unwilling tears when she was safe in Rossetti Mansions with the house to herself. "I'll never be unselfish again," she sobbed.

She was startled by the ring of a telegraph boy. However, it was not what she expected, for her tears ceased as she read. It was O'Hara, begging her in a humble and lengthy wire to dine with him at the Cecil. Her heart turned to him gratefully. What was it Jane had said? "Mr. O'Hara thinks gold is not good enough for you." He was always the same, always kind, always tender, never taking advantage of their wild adventures to say one word she would rather he had not said.

"I may forget I'm a lady—" she dashed fresh tears from her eyes—"but he never forgets he is a gentleman." So she sent an answer to the reinstated O'Hara and set forth to dine with him, dressed adorably. O'Hara thought she had never looked so pretty. He walked proudly into the Cecil with her and established her at a small table in the corner, where he ordered a dinner that even Sarah begged him to moderate. But he only laughed, and went on.

Sarah was well launched in her dinner when a man and a woman brushed past her as they took their seats at the next table. There were reasons why Miss Egerton could not turn pale, but a fierce, a frightened gleam lighted her narrowed eyes. Lord Urmston had evidently been seeking consolation, and by what evil fate was it that he brought it to the Cecil? O'Hara's back was to the couple, but Sarah must sit and face them throughout her over-long dinner. Urmston had not seen her yet. She leaned forward and touched O'Hara with a beseeching, trembling hand.

"Whatever you do, don't call me by my name," she said. "There is a man sitting behind you whom I once knew, and I don't want him to come and speak to me. Perhaps he won't be certain who I am if he does not

hear you say my name. I—I hate him!" incoherently.

"I'll break his neck if he annoys you!" O'Hara did not understand, but that was no matter—his Sarah could do no wrong. And the look of him gave Sarah courage.

"He's not—a very nice man! I know Jane," with late virtue, "would not like me to speak to him."

"All right," cheerfully. "You sha'n't."

Urmston had seen her by this time, but her look was as calmly unconscious as an utter stranger's. It was he who was disconcerted. Sarah under lowered lids saw him glance at his consolation with distaste—it was an opulently fair consolation with over-golden hair. Suddenly she felt faint, for he had turned his eyes full on her and in them was an expression that terrified her. She must take strong measures. If he thought O'Hara merely an acquaintance he was quite likely to come and accost her, and she knew the words that would be on his tongue. But if he could be made to think O'Hara was her husband! As she reflected she caught Urmston's eye—and he smiled.

At that smile Sarah's wild blood was up. There was something fundamentally strange and untamed about her under her languid manner, her childlike gaiety. With the same impulse with which she would have put a knife into Urmston had she been hard pressed, she leaned forward and spoke to O'Hara. It was some trifling nonsense that she uttered, but there was a sweet familiarity as of long use in her tone, such as Mr. O'Hara had never heard. The poor boy's heart filled with pride. There was a bustling and consultation of waiters round Urmston; for the moment he could not hear. Sarah, very low, spoke to O'Hara again.

"I said not to call me by my name, but you can't say 'hi' when you speak to me. You can say 'Sarah.' I believe," she laughed, "you always call me 'Sarah' in private."

O'Hara changed color.

"I would like to," he said, quietly.

"I wish I could think that in private life you called me 'Billy.'" For the Honorable William Desmond Craven O'Hara, the son of many earls, had no more romantic nickname than "Billy."

"I will if you like—Billy."

The man behind O'Hara heard the tone of the last word, and it gave him a new emotion. He looked at her left hand, where Jane's wedding ring was surmounted by Sarah's pearls. This was evidently the husband. Somehow he had ignored the fact that the husband might be in town. He would rather have seen him old or insignificant than unexceptionable like this. As he watched the pair leave the room Lord Urmston decided he was well out of this day's work, but he regretted Sarah infernally, and he was exceedingly rude and disagreeable to his consolation. Mr. O'Hara, when he had climbed up the stairs of Rossetti Mansions with Sarah, stood beside her in the empty drawing-room.

"Good-night," he said, quite huskily. "I have to thank you for the happiest evening I ever had in my life." He stooped, and with a certain reverence laid his lips lightly on her hand.

As the door closed behind him Sarah threw herself down on the sofa. There she lay till the dawn came in, her smart satin evening cloak huddled up round her, crying softly and bitterly with self-contempt and shame. If O'Hara only knew—everything!

X

MISS WINNIE WELLWOOD sat reading the papers. On the *World*, *Truth*, *Vanity Fair* and *Society* she browsed every week; you knew who was who if you did that and cast no pearls before younger sons. But this week there were no names exploited—except Mr. Miles Van Ingen's. He "had taken a deer forest," had "bought Lord Elderson's place in Devonshire," "was building a steam yacht," had "given

a dance with an American cotillion and American favors." Miss Wellwood's mouth watered at the favors. "All that money going to waste, and me getting old!" she said, viciously. She knew she might as well go out and try to catch the stars with a butterfly net as hope to get hold of Van Ingen. Besides, it dawned on her suddenly that in every paper a paragraph about Mrs. Osborne, the new American beauty, came after each that held Van Ingen's name. The "Ladies' Letters" were even bolder.

Mrs. Osborne at the Countess of Barwick's was, of course, mobbed, as usual. She bore her honors calmly, and danced a good deal with her compatriot, Mr. Van Ingen.

Mrs. Osborne I saw, among others. She was driving on the box seat of Mr. Van Ingen's coach, looking supremely beautiful and happy.

Mrs. Osborne's gown at Lady Ilminster's garden party at Bolland House was a dream in banana-green. The foamy flounces puzzled me, till I discovered they were of string-colored lace appliqué with wee pink ostrich feathers. She wore her favorite green shoes. *On dit* that she is so devoted to them as to mean to wear them *en seconde nocés*; but as that occasion is likely to be a purely American one we poor Islanders will probably see many new things thereat.

Miss Wellwood cast down the third paper. *En seconde nocés* was Greek to her. She clawed a meaning of her own out of it that was fairly correct. And she hated Mrs. Osborne with a fine vigor, because she was in no need of Mr. Miles Van Ingen's dollars—and Miss Wellwood was.

"Banana-green gown," she sniffed, sourly. "I bet her looks are all clothes. If she's so lovely why doesn't she have her photo in the shops? All clothes and luck, I call these 'beauties,'" savagely. "I was good-looking enough, but I'd no luck. That slim woman who lives up stairs, she's about the prettiest thing I've ever seen, and all the luck she's got is one little man that's running after her. And Thompson," with a laugh. "She wouldn't look at Thompson, even if he dared look at her. But

you wouldn't catch me living here if I'd her looks. One man," with deep scorn, "and a red-headed boy, all that ever come near her. She's either poor or a fool." She picked up her papers again. "I'd like to see this Mrs. Osborne that's caught Van Ingen. I'd lay odds he's having tea with her now. Tea! That's where the difference comes in. They give tea and we give champagne. But it comes to the same thing in the end," cynically. "I won't read any more about Van Ingen. I'm never likely to do more than read. He doesn't go anywhere I go. They don't—when they can get banana-green gowns and tea. Ur-rh! I can see that tea now."

She was quite right, as far as the banana-green gown went. The tea stood neglected in Mrs. Osborne's drawing-room. Miles Van Ingen, very pale and shining eyed, stood facing Mrs. Osborne in the middle of the room.

"Do you love me as much as that?" he said. He was triumphant. Mrs. Osborne nodded. Alone with him, all the mystical, sorceress look had gone from her face. She was girlish, fresh—and ashamed! She covered her face suddenly, as if she could not meet his eyes.

"Don't," he said. "Look at me. There's nothing that can't be said between you and me. There's never been a day we haven't loved each other for all these years." He forgot the trifling episode of Osborne. This woman was his, always had been and always would be.

He caught her hands and kissed her, as no one had kissed her since the day he left her. In a hired house in Eaton Place Mrs. Osborne stood inside the gates of heaven.

"Kiss me again," he said. "We've years to make up for. But we'll have years to do it in." He laughed, quick and short. "Oh, blessed London and blessed money! I'd never have found you without them."

"Let me go," she said. "I'm dizzy." But she was not. She only felt as if something had stopped the rioting blood in her, made her faint.

Yet when he brought her a chair she did not sit down.

"Why couldn't you have found me without the money?" she said. "You could have gone back."

"You married Osborne."

"Before that."

"I couldn't have married you even if you had remained single. You knew that. Not till this year. I—I was packing raisins in a factory in Mexico. Faugh! I can see those colored papers now."

So he had really been penniless! Her blood began to move again. Sometimes she had wondered if—But no matter. He loved her with all his soul now.

"How much do you love me?" She laughed because she was so happy.

"You wouldn't believe me. You were always an unbeliever," shrewdly. "But it's I who can't believe now. Do you know I'm a poor match? Oh, I'm not talking about money—you've that already. But a woman all London raves over, Mrs. Osborne this and Mrs. Osborne that—you could marry a prince to-morrow, and you know it. I can't believe—oh, you're a sort of queen, Mrs. Osborne!" with that quick little laugh. "I can't believe you're coming off your throne to me."

"I'm a fashion," with a quick intake of her breath. "An—an episode! Miles, tell me, if I weren't Mrs. Osborne, if I hadn't 'caught on,' would you love me?"

"I mightn't have seen you," with superfluous truth.

"If I'd had a husband alive when you met me?"

"Osborne died in '98," he said, roughly. "You never loved him. Forget him."

"Loved him! Why should I love him?" It was a queer thing to say. "He's got nothing to do with it—except the money that lets me be the success you say I am. I—I'm only talking, Miles. Let me talk. I always," with a sharp smile, "liked to get at the root of things. Suppose, instead of finding me Mrs. Osborne, you'd found me married to a well-

meaning, kind, middle-class husband, the sort I should have been likely to marry at Aunt Adela's, what would you have done then?"

"Kept out of your way—or made you get a divorce."

"If you couldn't do either? If——"

He laughed.

"If 'ifs and ans were pots and pans,'" he said; but the laugh had covered annoyance. "It would be just the same. You know it would. Sweetheart, what's the matter?"

For the second time Mrs. Osborne's hands had covered her face.

"I—I wanted to be sure it was I you loved, not the Mrs. Osborne the town runs after. You are sure?"

"I'm sure I won't let you talk any more nonsense." He came to her masterfully. "You're mine; you've said so."

"But listen. I must——"

"I won't. That's more than your 'must.' Do you think anything could stop my loving you? Nothing. Now are you satisfied?" He took her hands from her face, and whatever thought of indecision had been on it was gone.

He was right, nothing mattered; nothing she could ever tell him would matter. It was Miles who had come back to her, Miles who would love her as she loved him, out beyond and in the world to come, whatever one called it, hell or heaven. She held out her arms to him as if he were all she had on earth.

"My sweetheart, how lovely you are!" he said, his cheek against hers. And his voice caught at the soul of Mrs. Osborne.

Whatever she had to tell him of a hitherto colorless life should not be told to-day. Besides, there was a step outside, a——

She was standing at the tea table as the door opened; Mr. Van Ingen with an impassive face was saying good-bye. Mrs. Osborne's incoming visitors thought they had never seen her so lovely; and perhaps they never had.

She dined with Lady Lanark. Van Ingen from the other side of the table worshiped her. The glamour

of her dazed him—her beauty, her vogue, her indefinable air, the beauty that was redoubled to-night because of him. As soon as dinner was over he would ask her to let him tell his victory. His hard face was feverish as he thought of it. But after dinner Lady Lanark had plans; he found he could go home or agree to them. She apparently patronized an oil-and-color shop for her complexion, and she liked her pleasures to match. They were all going to the Empire. Mr. Van Ingen knew why as well as if he had been told.

"Show!" cried Lady Lanark. "We haven't come to see the show. We've come to sit here in the lounge and eat ices and see the world." Mr. Van Ingen was the only man who did not put on an air of nervous gloom. "Dear me, they look very prim and pious!" She omitted to say whom she meant. "They're—really, Mr. Van Ingen, they do those things better in France!"

Mrs. Osborne fanned herself, her exquisite head held even more backward than usual. It amused her to hear Lady Lanark appeal to Van Ingen; he was so openly restive. He started now.

"What? The show? How do you know when you won't look at it?"

"No, not the show, my dear *ingenu!*" Lady Lanark was impervious to snubs. "The—the—what's that over there? It *looks*—like a Japanese screen!" She pointed to a girl in red, with gold embroideries spilled all over her. "And the lady in the tailor frock—so sweet and sergey! What's her name?"

"I really never heard it." Van Ingen calmly retired to Mrs. Osborne's side. "Why on earth did we ever let her drag us here?" he said, in a furious undertone. "Let me take you home."

"I daren't. They'd talk!"

"Then let me tell them."

"Please, no," said Mrs. Osborne, faintly.

He nodded.

"You watch me get our beloved hostess away," he remarked, drily.

Mrs. Osborne laughed. If the laugh was sweet and ringing, it was also incredulous.

At the sound of it Miss Winnie Wellwood swung round and inspected Mrs. Osborne's unconscious back.

"My, what a gown!" said she to the girl in serge. "Who's the man?"

"Oh, Van something!" The sergey girl did not care to converse with Miss Wellwood. "American, millionaire. The woman's the beauty, Mrs. Osborne. Let go my arm! Don't grab me like that! What's the matter?"

Once more Mrs. Osborne's laugh came high and sweet as she passed, triumphantly leading Lady Lanark away.

"Mrs. Osborne!" repeated Miss Wellwood. She plumped down on a convenient chair. "*Mrs. Osborne!* That's her?"

"Yes. What about it?"

"She's a beauty," said the Wellwood, slowly; "a beauty. But, my word, she's a fool!"

XI

SARAH ON the narrow hardness of her bed in the flat lay waiting for Jane to come. She sleepily contemplated the long array of her little shoes ranged out on the mantelpiece, rejoicing that she had thought of bestowing them there before it occurred to Jane. Jane had been obliged to put hers under her bed and glare passionately into that dusty bourn whenever she required a fresh pair of shoes, which she did ten times a day. Miss Egerton also contemplated, with content at her own ingenuity, the thirty-guinea traveling bag for which she had found a home in the empty grate.

"It only takes a little cleverness to be perfectly comfortable in a flat," she thought, proudly. "Where is that low wretch, Jane? I want the light put out."

She climbed over Jane's couch to extinguish the gas when she was conscious of sharp whispering from

Adams's room, where Jane had gone to be unlaced. There was something going on! Miss Egerton nimbly arrived on the scene of action.

"What are you whispering for? And why are you in the dark?" at the top of her cool soprano voice.

"Hush, miss, please!" Adams was nearly in tears.

"Shut up, Sarah!"

Mrs. Wilton and her maid stood in pitchy darkness, each holding to a slat of the Venetian blind and peering cautiously out through the slit afforded.

"Oh! what shall we do, Sarah? He looks like a *murderer*!"

"What!"

Sarah, all in white, shouldered her sister out of the way. In the opposite window, four yards away, sat a man. He was smoking, and every now and then the glow from the end of his cigar lit up a loathsome face. All three women stood motionless.

"He's been staring like that at me all the evening," shivered Adams, "and he watched the gentlemen go just now, half out of the window."

"He couldn't see them," Sarah murmured, contemptuously. "He's got a perfect right to sit at his own window."

"He could, Sarah. They lighted matches all the way down stairs; he could see them on every landing, and he's only sitting there to stare at us."

Suddenly there was a sharp rasp. The man opposite had lighted a fusee. The light shone plainly on his face, and it was the face of a beast. The three watchers sprang from the window.

"What a devil!" cried Sarah, sharply, between her teeth.

Jane threw herself on Adams's bed.

"Oh, he's a detective, I know he's a detective! The Wiltons have sent him to watch me!" She broke into shuddering sobs. Sarah threw her arms round her.

"Hush, darling, hush! He's just a horrid man trying to annoy us." Her own heart was beating quickly; she had never seen just such a look on a man's face before. "Adams, the

door!" she said, softly, as she held Jane tight.

Adams flew to the front door and bolted it. Jane was quiet and Sarah got up and stood beside the maid in the bedroom doorway. The little entry was only half-dark, for the drawing-room light shone into it from one end. As they stood mistress and maid looked at each other. Someone treading softly on the balls of his feet was coming up the long stone stair.

"He's gone," said Jane, with relief. She had got up and was peering through the blind once more.

"Brute! He's gone down his own stairs and in our door, and he's coming up our stairs. Hush, don't move!"

In the silence the soft footfall stopped outside their flat, which was the top one in the building. Some one knocked. Sarah hardly breathed. Then the letter-box was cautiously rattled. Sarah's wild blood raced in her; she made a step in the entry, but Adams caught her firmly by her white embroidered sleeve.

"Don't go out, miss. He can see you!" She spoke very low, but the man heard her.

"T'ss, t'ss, t'ss!" he called, with vile caution, through the letter-box.

"I'm going to open the door and speak to that man!" Sarah's high voice was low with rage. "To think he should dare!"

Jane was herself again. She laid a quiet hand on Sarah's slim shoulder.

"Don't move," she said. "Let him knock. Once we opened the door he would be in; we couldn't keep him out. And then if we made a fuss and roused the house, they would believe we had let him in and got frightened afterward. It's this beastly suburb that's the matter. They're not used to people who have visitors all day and go out in hansom. He has probably seen all our doings, and saw us bring those two men home with us. Oh, why aren't we in America, where, if you amuse yourself, no one immediately thinks you vile?"

The handle of the door turned

softly; it shook as a strong shoulder heaved against it, but the bolt and the latch held. Presently the footsteps, treading softly, went away.

"I wish he had done it while Mr. O'Hara was here," Sarah thought longingly of O'Hara's iron muscles.

"Not he," said Jane. "Catch him! They would have kicked him down stairs, too, and we should all have been put in the papers."

"Let's go to bed," said Sarah, drearily. "My feet are frozen on this horrid oilcloth. Mr. Hopkins will make us leave this flat if we tell him we've been annoyed, and we can't go to a hotel. You know we can't."

"The bolt is strong; he can pound all night if he likes. Come to bed. Don't light your gas again, Adams. Good-night."

She followed the shivering Sarah to bed, but their narrow stretchers were not reposeful. They turned and tossed for an hour. Suddenly Jane started out of bed.

"He's at the door again."

Sarah stood in the bedroom door, looking into the sitting-room. She had taken Jane's bed at the fly in the effort to pass her sister, and had bumped her shins successively against every article in the room.

"Come back to bed," she said, contemptuously. "If he likes to spend the night on our door mat, let him. I've cut my foot on your vile bonnet-box."

She limped back to bed and fell fast asleep, to dream of earthquakes.

It was morning, and the postman's knock was loud at the door. Adams appeared presently with letters and tea.

"That's a funny letter!" Sarah surveyed a common envelope with distaste; the writing on it sloped backward, and she despised it. "It's for you, Jane."

Jane was drinking hot water; she said tea was not good for the complexion. She felt as languid as her tasteless draught.

"Open the thing," she said, listlessly.

Sarah pulled a small slip of paper from the flimsy envelope—and stared. Jane snatched it.

This is from a friend. You'd better go away.

THOMPSON.

"I wonder if we had," she said, with curious earnestness.

"Go away!" shrieked Sarah. "The man's mad. We're away enough, what with those old Wiltons and adorers and things. You can go if you like, but I sha'n't stir," and she departed, to be first at the bath that would not run.

Her pains were wasted, for Jane breakfasted in bed, to an obligato of discomforting thoughts. Against her will she believed in the good faith of their besieger of last night. She wished, as the panic-struck always wish, that she had had sense enough to dress and speak to him. She had but just finished a languid toilet and emerged into the drawing-room when Adams announced a visitor.

"Mr. Elmslie, m'm, would like to see you."

"Who's he?" said Sarah.

"The agent for the flats. Ask him to come in, Adams."

Mr. Elmslie was tall and gray, with the manner of an auctioneer. Jane asked him to sit down, which he did with an uneasiness the appearance of his chair did not justify.

"I have come about a letter," he began.

"A letter?" Jane was nobly calm. This was not the man of last night. How did he know about the letter?

"Yes." He fidgeted. "Some of the ladies in the Mansions have written complaining about—about you."

"About us!" Jane turned white.

"How interesting!" said Sarah, languidly.

Mr. Elmslie glanced at his surroundings; he wished he had not come in person.

"In fact, Mrs. Wilton, they have written they consider you too young, and—and cheerful. They think it improper—in fact they think it gives a bad tone to the Mansions for two girls

to live alone here." He had meant to say it with elegance, but he became blunt in his despair.

"What impertinence!" said Jane, icily. "Still, Sarah, I am glad we look young; are not you? You know all about us," turning on the wretched Elmslie. "I wonder you took the trouble to come and tell us such idiocy."

"I don't see—" Sarah's calm eyes rested on the emissary who had in very truth been sent to evict them—"I don't see what we can do to look old, except wear wigs. I suppose it is a lady opposite who has been writing about us. Tell her we do not like being stared at through an opera glass. Tell her we find it boring. Does she accuse us of anything else but youth?"

"The truth is," said Elmslie, slowly, gazing at Jane, who was evidently not wasted on him, "that they don't exactly complain."

"What do they do, then?"

"They simply say that you have no husbands—and many visitors—and—"

Jane rose—a different woman from the one who had trembled at his entrance. Her head held very high and backward, her eyes half-closed, she looked at him, and then smiled—magnificently. Whatever she had been, she was perfectly untroubled now.

"My husband is in India, and my sister is not married. If you want us to go on that account we are perfectly willing. We," with calm insolence, "will leave the neighborhood unpolluted for Miss Wellwood."

Mr. Elmslie caught his breath. The letters were suddenly stigmatized in his mind as "d—d cheek."

"My goodness!" he said, incoherently. "I was a fool; I might have known. I—I will arrange this affair for you. I understand these complaints are insults. I will answer them accordingly. I—"

"Then it is nothing?"

"Quite so. Nothing." If she had been a murderess Mr. Elmslie would not have cared. All he knew was that

he had never seen anyone so beautiful in all his life. He bowed himself out, sadly conscious that he, as a visitor, would not be welcome at Rossetti Mansions.

"And you never mentioned last night and that horrid man!" shrieked the astonished Sarah when Elmslie had departed.

"I forgot him," returned Jane, meekly. But she had not; she only preferred other methods. Last night's letter was no worry to her now, since it was all of a piece with the agent's visit. But if the writer waited uselessly night after night to speak to Mrs. Wilton on the stairs, no one but the night-watchman knew.

XII

THERE was no escape. Jane was forced to "dine quietly" with the Wiltons. Sarah was pungently ignored in the invitation, and she smiled.

"Praise the pigs!" was her low comment. "Don't agitate yourself to explain. I would not enjoy it any more than you will. I am going out. I shall take Adams. I shall go to the Palace."

"Why don't you take an adorer instead?"

"They wouldn't go. Or if they did they'd stuff me into a box and not let me call my soul my own. They treat me as if I were made of virgin gold and everything were acid and might corrode me. I shall take Adams. And I won't even sit in the stalls. I shall sit in the up-stairs balcony."

"You can't."

"I can, my beloved. And if you put me to it I can walk about in the promenade."

And Miss Egerton retired to the bedroom to make a carefully studied toilet. Evening dress was out of the question; street dress was too hot. Eventually she compromised on a muslin blouse, all creamy pink and lace, a chiffon ruffle, and a toque covered with pink roses. These splen-

dors she toned down with an old black satin skirt and covered up with a gorgeous dark-blue satin cloak adorned with quantities of priceless lace. She surveyed herself with some pride, and sailed blandly into the drawing-room.

Jane raised her eyebrows.

"What's the matter?" inquired the bedecked one, with suspicion.

"Oh, nothing! You look sweet, but not precisely inconspicuous!"

"Fudge! I've had this cloak and this old skirt for forty years."

"You have had that complexion for only the past forty minutes." For the pale Sarah was adorned with a flush as of faint roses.

"Only ten, if you wish to be exact."

Sarah, unabashed, departed to beat up Adams. That damsel had likewise spent time on her toilet. She had enlivened the smart black dress that duty compelled her to wear with a hat culled from the treasuries of the Brompton Road. It was large, and it bore plumes of black that waved high.

"Good heavens!" cried Sarah. "I had no idea you were so pretty, Adams." She surveyed her handmaiden with astonishment, taking in the black hair and the creamy skin deftly brought out by like tones in her toilet. Sarah's pinkness and her amber-gold hair stood out softly beside the low-toned good looks of her maid.

"Come along, we're going in an omnibus," she cried, prosaically, and the enraptured Adams followed the rapid click of her high heels down the long stone stairs.

"Buy the tickets, Adams!" Sarah spoke rather faintly. They were very late, the entrance to the Palace was full of men, and Sarah's pink toque was striking to the eye. Adams was a London girl, and not in the least appalled. She purchased tickets and followed Sarah up stairs. Three men strolled up after them, but Sarah was happily oblivious.

Up-stairs it was pitch dark. Someone was in the middle of a turn. It was a slim girl in voluminous drap-

ings on which were chastely thrown varying transparencies of the heads of different members of the Royal family. The audience applauded loyally; they were accustomed to the type of the Royal countenances, and did not find them unhandsome.

Sarah leaned breathless over the rail of the promenade.

"Adams," she breathed, "there aren't any seats."

Adams, with the air of a masquerading duchess, beckoned her onward after a white-capped maid. Sarah was conscious of going down steps in darkness, dazzled the while by blue and red flashes on the darkened stage where the Royal family glared in primary colors, of stumbling over outstretched legs, finally of sinking into her seat with joy. The lights flashed up as the girl on the stage finished her last gyration, and the French gentlemen whom Sarah's preposterous heels had made wince were all glaring wrathfully at her. But she was letting her cloak slip back from her shoulders, and her innocent pinkiness and the cloudy amber of her small, drooping head worked a miracle with the annoyed ones. They glanced eloquently at their friends instead of glaring at Sarah. One of them offered her his program, and she calmly took it, but somehow he became conscious that he was a hairdresser in private life, and he felt it impossible to begin the conversation he had contemplated. All that he accomplished was to sit out the rest of the performance without any program.

As the next turn came on Sarah piously gave thanks that she had not come with an adorer. Four men were singing, singing very well, but one of them was so wobblingly fat, either by nature or art, that he made her feel ill. A Frenchman beside the hairdresser made a realistic remark to him in French that caused the hapless Sarah to start.

"I'm not a bit amused!" she said, wrathfully. "And all this smoke when I'm not smoking makes my head ache." For all round her, in the

low-turned light, resounded the cheerful click of wax matches, followed by the little flame and glow as man after man lighted up. It was paradise, with the peri inside but unable to enjoy herself. Miss Egerton's sharp eye traveled carefully over the house when the fat and pendulous horror on the stage had disappeared amid frantic applause, and the lights were turned on.

"There's a woman smoking in one of the boxes. I shall smoke," she declared, cheerfully. "Can we buy cigarettes in the bar, Adams?"

It took a good deal to jar Adams.

"Certainly, Miss Egerton. Shall I get you some?"

"I'll go with you."

And she followed the doughty, handsome maid across the promenade and into the refreshment place. Adams disappeared into a crowd of men; Sarah sank composedly on a wide sofa and surveyed the scene. Everywhere were men and girls walking up and down or seated at small tables in retired corners having drinks. Sarah envied none of them. They looked dull, their scraps of talk that reached her were coarse and stupid. Still she was the only woman in sight not talking to a man, and it was annoying to be out of the fashion. Not for worlds would she have owned to herself that she resented the glances of the attached and unattached males lavished on her dainty prettiness, where she nestled alone in a corner of the big sofa by the door. Adams returned with the cigarettes, and Sarah rose. They went into the promenade and leaned on the rail very happily while they discussed the house. Suddenly Adams took her mistress by the arm.

"That fair man has followed you ever since we came in—he'll speak to you if you don't move. And—don't start, Miss Egerton—I saw Mr. Hopkins behind him just now as I turned my head!"

Sarah glided nimbly to her place as the lights went down, and the fair man retired disappointed. Mr. Hopkins hastily decided that he must have

had the jumps to have imagined Miss Egerton here alone, and he went down-stairs again. Sarah drew a long breath.

"Adams, you are a priceless angel!" she said, solemnly. "One more minute and my situation—heavens! suppose Mr. Hopkins, of all persons, had observed me being accosted by a man I didn't know! After that escape I can venture on anything!"

She took a cigarette from the box of Egyptians Adams had procured, and leaned back composedly in her chair to a stout Frenchman behind her. He was accompanied by his stouter wife, and when the slim, fair angel in front of him calmly asked him for a light his position was truly appalling. Had he been alone, indeed!—but alas, he was not! Politeness made him produce the match, abject cowardice in the glare of his wife's eye made him present it to Sarah in silence.

Anna Held came on the stage, and for the first time Sarah took joy in the performance. She laughed softly as she smoked her cigarette, oblivious of Hopkins below stairs and the fair man who stood gazing at her from the promenade. The hairdresser next her was more puzzled than ever. He was obliged to dismiss the theory that she was a little girl run away from the schoolroom, and fortunately the supposition he substituted was unknown to the subject of it.

Sarah put out her cigarette against the opera glass in front of her.

"Let's go home, Adams. I'm hungry!" and she yawned. The people were getting up to go. Sarah and Adams went out in the crush, escaping Hopkins by keeping carefully at his back. As they edged along behind him in the bright light of the street door Sarah gasped:

"Adams, run!"

She seized her by the arm and dragged her across the street, then on at top speed to Piccadilly Circus. Neither of them spoke till they were safely on an omnibus, wedged in by grubby, nondescript people.

"Colonel Wilton!" Adams ejaculated.

Solemnly Sarah nodded. "Bad old man!" she said, virtuously. She had never seen a pair of opera glasses that had been leveled on her all the evening from a box, nor the puzzled ill temper in a face behind them.

A man got up on the omnibus. It was the fair man who had gazed at them throughout the evening. Sarah drew another long breath, this time of annihilated conceit. For the man sat down beside Adams. It was to Adams that he addressed himself, and for the first time in her life Sarah comprehended that mistress and maid were of the same clay. The man was a gentleman and perfectly polite. Sarah found a wicked joy in egging the uncomfortable and reluctant Adams on to mild flirtation. In spite of drawbacks it was evident that the latter could hold her own. Sarah felt like saying "bravo" at every sharp, quiet cut the town-bred girl dealt her unwelcome swain.

"I wonder, though, what he would think if I were to sit beside him and talk to his valet."

The omnibus stopped at Rutland Gate, and Adams whispered to her. They rose and flew down the steps and disappeared before the fair man realized they had departed. It was dark and there were no hansoms. Miss Egerton, as she trudged along toward Hammersmith in uncomfortable shoes, felt that if ever there was an overrated pleasure it was going to music halls. But Adams sailed onward puffed with pride.

XIII

THE clock was striking nine as Mrs. Wilton toiled up the stairs to her flat. She had told Hopkins that she did not mind stairs; to-night she was conscious of each step of them. She looked, as she passed the landing light, tired; exactly as a woman looks who has been out to lunch and then to a garden party, and has hated each worse than the other. Adams opened the door before she had time to knock.

"I'm so glad you've come back, m'm," she said, solemnly.

"Why? Is anything—" she was so weary that she was petulant—"the matter here?" as if it were the last straw to have anything wrong in the flat.

"Those dreadful people who let you their flat never paid their gas bill, and the gas man came this afternoon and said he must have the four pounds they owed him. I would not give him all that money."

"Did you have it?" Jane's interruption was to the point.

"Well, no," unwillingly, "I hadn't. So he said he must cut off the gas. And he did."

"What about dinner? There was no dinner?" said Jane.

"No, m'm! Miss Egerton did not come in. I suppose she was dining out. My tea," gloomily, "I made on the oil stove."

Mrs. Wilton was at once aware that she was hungry. It was this, of course, that made her so depressed.

"This is too much!" she said.

"I might make you some porridge on the oil stove."

Jane turned ungratefully from the suggestion.

"No, thank you, Adams; I am too hungry. What I want is dinner." She never drank champagne; but it came over her now that some soup and a glass of it would lift this senseless worry off her. Where on earth was Sarah? It was not fair of her to be out.

"Here is Miss Egerton now," remarked the doleful Adams. "Sometimes she brings cakes home with her."

"Cakes!" cried Sarah, gaily. "What are you talking about cakes for at this time of night? Isn't there any dinner left? I'm getting old. The society of a young man no longer makes me oblivious of food."

"There was no dinner," announced Jane.

"No dinner! What rubbish! I'll have supper, then," with the falling inflection of relief.

"They've cut off the gas, miss," said Adams.

"Well, there's a range—cook on the range."

"It won't draw."

"Won't draw!" cried Sarah, flinging herself down on the sofa. "It must draw. I'm hungry. Can't you do something?"

"Just after the man cut off the gas Mr. Elmslie sent word over to say he'd paid him rather than let us be inconvenienced. But the gas man had gone. I can't do anything, miss, till the morning. Couldn't you ladies go out?"

"Why didn't I stay out?" groaned Sarah. "But I couldn't."

"Where's Mr. O'Hara?"

"You know where he is," gloomily. "Dining out and going to the Glastonburys' ball. He has to! She's his aunt. You knew that."

The weariness came back to Mrs. Wilton's face. This night, of all nights, she wished devoutly that Mr. O'Hara had not known a soul in town.

"Why can't we go to Mrs. Osborne's?" said Sarah, briskly.

"We can't," grimly. "She's away. We can't go anywhere. You know," irrelevantly, "I have to be at the Wiltons' most of to-morrow. And anyway, Mrs. Osborne is supposed to have been off at Paddington in the 8.20 train."

"Then she's out of it! But," firmly, "we must eat. That Italian place in the Strand—we could go there to supper."

"But it's miles from here."

"There's nowhere nearer," drily. "You know that." She spoke as securely as if Regent street and Piccadilly had been wiped out.

But Jane only said: "No, there's nowhere nearer."

It was odd that after having driven all the way in a cab, Jane, nevertheless, should stand breathless in the entrance of the unfashionable restaurant.

"Come on," urged Sarah. "No one we ever heard of will be here. We're just between dinner and

supper, too. The room's half-empty."

Jane cast hesitation to the winds.

"Where shall we go, up-stairs or down? Down is à la carte."

"Oh, down, if you've got enough money."

Sarah's experience of many restaurants had shown her the error of table d'hôte dining. But it was Jane's party, so she kindly added a saving clause to her decision.

"Heaps!"

Jane kept money in little piles on the bedroom mantelpiece between Sarah's row of shoes. She had hastily swept a pile of sovereigns into her pocket, just as they were leaving that crowded retreat.

She led the way straight before her and took possession of a table near the door.

Sarah gazed at the electric lamps with soft rose shades on the tables, marked with satisfaction her own reflection in the many mirrors, and regarded the astoundingly frescoed walls with keen rapture.

"This is my favorite color for lamp shades," she remarked, cheerfully.

"I know I shall enjoy my supper."

"Thank heaven, I can back myself to order it against any man in London," murmured Jane, piously.

She was apt to suffer many things when dining with the excellent Hopkins, who liked joints—with vegetables.

"Cold trout, Sarah, or whitebait?"

"Whitebait. Mr. O'Hara always feeds me on cold trout."

The head waiter murmured respectfully that one portion of fish would doubtless be ample for the two ladies, who had chosen their wine and omitted soup in a manner that had placed them high in his estimation.

"*Filet à la Toscano*," Jane commanded.

"Shall we have asparagus?"

"Yes, cold."

"And a vanilla soufflé. They make heavenly soufflés. And—can we have some strawberries—with kirsch or maraschino? Iced, you know."

The head waiter did know, and the

two buccaneers sat awaiting their supper. It was early, and there were not many people. They were sufficiently noticeable as they sat discouraging happily, and a middle-aged gentleman opposite eyed them with approbation. He specially admired Sarah's exquisite wild-rose complexion.

"They're not very quick," remarked that lady, ruefully. "Jane, I shall *die* if I do not get something to eat!"

"Have a *hors d'œuvre*."

"Never eat raw fish!" ungratefully eyeing the Norwegian *hareng*. Jane was eating a buttered roll; she did not specially like it, but it kept her calm.

"If I could turn pale," wailed Sarah, "I should faint. But you can't expect everything from a complexion that lives in a china box!"

"Here's the whitebait."

Jane divided it triumphantly. There was "ample" for two, as the waiter had prophesied.

Under the gentle influences of champagne and whitebait Sarah revived. She even became hilarious. Her dark-blue eyes shone starry, her laugh rang out nearly as clear and sweet as Jane's—Jane had the most delicious laugh in the world. And Jane, too, sat laughing and talking like a happy child, her modishly dressed hair and her fine hat somehow adding point to the fresh delicacy of her face, the fine, unspoiled lines of her firm red lips. After all, her apprehensions had been no more than hungry crossness.

"Don't, don't, Sarah!" she implored. For Sarah was recklessly flinging away her best conversation and her most cheerful tales on this tête-à-tête dinner with a sister. Could Colonel Wilton, who said sisters always hated each other and talked only before men, but have heard her!

"Oh, Sarah, I am getting hysterical. Do stop making me laugh," Jane implored.

She put down her knife and fork on her plate and put her hand in her pocket for a handkerchief. A small

pile of coins came out with it and dropped with a clink into her lap. She looked at them absently. Then she started. She thrust her hand back into her pocket; there was nothing else in it. Every bit of color left her face.

She had brought five shillings instead of five sovereigns; she had not enough to pay for their dinner!

"Sarah!"

"What's the matter? Do you see any Wiltons?"

"Oh, do attend, Sarah! Have you got any money?"

"Me? You know I never have," cheerfully. "Why? You said you'd plenty."

"I made a mistake." The *filet* was growing cold on Jane's plate. "Look! That's all I've got."

She pointed a small, miserable finger at the pile of silver that should have been gold.

Sarah dived wildly into the recesses of her gown. Piecemeal she produced shillings and sixpences.

"Two pounds," she announced, grimly. "It is not enough."

Jane drank some champagne. Then she did some rapid mental arithmetic.

"It's not enough, not nearly. Oh, that soufflé! Why did I order it? It was only greediness; we didn't need it!"

The middle-aged man near by was taking in the tragedy. He gave way to a broad smile of approval at Sarah's calm response.

"Well, it *is* ordered, and I'm going to eat it. When we get to the bill, we can think of wrestling with it. Your *filet's* getting cold."

Jane took up her knife and fork again, but visions of a row and an outraged proprietor loomed large before her. Even the soufflé did not give her courage. But the strawberries and maraschino made her bold.

"Best strawberries and maraschino in London one gets here," she announced, as she ate her first. At her third she waxed cheerful, and she was herself again throughout the coffee and cigarettes. It was Sarah who

was doubtful about smoking without the stalwart O'Hara to back her.

"Pouf!" said Jane, her cigarette tight in her childish mouth as she got a light from the outwardly calm waiter. "They can only ask us to stop. This is the first smoke I've had to-day."

She leaned back, placidly happy. They were not asked to stop; no one took any notice of them.

"I can't smoke in peace till I know about that bill," said Sarah, suddenly. She unearthed half-a-crown from a forgotten pocket and gave it to Jane. There was a period of awful suspense; then the bill arrived on a plate. Jane glanced at it; Sarah snatched it.

"Oh, blessed half-crown!" she cried. "Give me that light, Jane," holding out a slim, fair hand for the spirit lamp. For the bill was just two pounds—they had half-a-crown for the waiter.

But when they were in the street it dawned on them that they had only sixpence to get them home.

"Hansom, and pay at the house," said Sarah.

"No money when we get there. I remember now. I paid the bills yesterday."

"The top of an omnibus will be much nicer," calmly. "I've always wanted to go on one at night. Come on. We'll get one from Charing Cross."

Jane said nothing. Her mental aspect was clouded again by the vision of a man's face—if he could see them careering madly up the Strand at 11 P.M.! But at Charing Cross there was not one omnibus for West Kensington.

"We can't stay here," said Jane, desperately. "We must go to Piccadilly Circus in the first one we see, and get our own there."

She climbed as she spoke into a dark-green omnibus bearing the desired legend of Chapel Street and Piccadilly. But there was no room inside. With shaking legs she followed Sarah to the top and to the front seat.

"Horses are quite good," said Sarah. Sarah was enjoying herself.

"We're all good on this 'bus!" The driver turned round with a drunken leer. "Men and 'orses and girls are all good!"

"Don't talk to him!" commanded Jane. "Don't you see he is a pirate? He's drunk." She picked up her skirts and fled wildly down the steps. "And the conductor—oh, hear the conductor!"

There was no need to draw attention to him. His cheerfully intoxicated yells were loud in their ears.

"Come on! My 'bus goes everywhere. To hell, if you like!" He caught Jane's arm. "Hi, miss, you can't get off! If you does we charges sixpence."

But she fled by him after Sarah into the crowd. It seemed miles to Piccadilly, and no blue omnibus greeted them when they reached the corner.

"We'd better walk to Mrs. Osborne's," said Jane, desperately. "We'll never get to the flat. Come across the street. She might have come home unexpectedly. Anyhow, they'll let us in."

The lamps shone down on them bright as day as they waited while the stream of hansoms and omnibuses passed ceaselessly, and for once the policeman lingered before stopping the traffic to let them cross.

"Jane!" cried Sarah.

"Sarah!" muttered Jane.

In a hansom close to them, but driving rapidly past, were Mrs. Wilton and her lord.

"Did they know us?" Jane was sick with horror. But she grew worse when she turned and beheld another hansom coming from the other direction. Out of it Mr. Hopkins and Mr. O'Hara gazed straight at them.

There was no question of going to Mrs. Osborne's now. Jane grasped her sister by the arm, and they tore across the street under the noses of omnibus horses, but not before they had observed a wild stampede in the hansom, and had heard "Stop! stop!" from its occupants.

"Here's an omnibus!" Sarah

jerked Jane into it. It went to Putney, but that was no matter. There were two vacant seats on the top. From that eminence they desried two men tearing back from the point at which they had succeeded in stopping their hansom. Mr. Hopkins rushed to the omnibus as it started.

"No room!" yelled the conductor.

"We'll stand."

"Not allowed," roared the man, with a glance at the policeman directing the traffic.

Sarah looked no more, for the reluctant Hopkins had dropped off the step. Jane was too agitated to speak. Not till they were past the corner of Brompton road did she muster courage to lead the way down from the sheltering omnibus into the street. Penniless, weary, for once silent, Sarah trudged beside her. It had been a day of storm. It seemed the middle of the night when they came to their own door, but not even the night-watchman saw them drag wearily into its blessed shelter. Half-way up the endless stairs Jane lagged and stopped; by chance she looked out of the landing window.

Winnie Wellwood's door was open. In the stream of light from it a man came out, and—Jane Wilton's heart stopped beating—the man was Van Ingen!

She set her teeth and walked upstairs.

XIV

"JANE," said Sarah, half-awake, "Jane!" She looked at the empty bed beside hers; then sat up and stared round the little bedroom. Was Jane ill that she was up at half-past seven in the morning? The electric bell ringing as it had never rung in that flat brought Adams at a run. But all her mistress said was:

"Breakfast." She had seen a note on her bed. She read it, standing barefoot by the window—perhaps that made her shiver. The note was simple enough:

I've gone out—I had to go. If the Wiltons come I don't care. I'm done

with Wiltons. Don't go to Mrs. Osborne's till you see me. I may be back in an hour; I may stay there. If I do I'll stay for good.

"Don't care!" "Done with Wiltons!" repeated Sarah. "She's mad! She can't be done with them. Oh, I hate George Wilton, I hate him! Why did I ever let her marry him? But if she doesn't come back—" Sarah, who never cried, was crying wildly. "What shall I do? Oh, what shall I do?" She knew Jane could never pay the price of being "done with Wiltons." "I thought it would be fun. But it isn't—funny!"

She dressed, at half-past seven, because she must be doing something. She was afraid to go out, afraid Jane might come back and miss her. If she had dared be honest with herself she would have said, afraid Jane might not come back. "In an hour," Jane had written. What on earth did she mean by an hour? There were years of minutes, aging centuries of them, and they stretched on indefinitely. By four Sarah Egerton had paid mentally all the price that would bankrupt Jane, the price of being done with Wiltons. At half-past four precisely an impetuously touched doorbell gave a hideous and disquieting shock to nerves that were nearly at breaking strain.

"Adams—" she had to moisten her lips to say it—"who is it?"

Adams craned to the glass of the front door.

"Mrs. and Miss Wilton, m'm."

Something like electricity ran through Sarah. If Jane were done with Wiltons she could tell them so, decently and in order; no silly schoolgirl prank should do it for her. And—there was the off chance yet; Jane might never tell them. The sister walked back to the drawing-room and sat down.

"Truth, mixed with Osbornes, will do the Wiltons," she said to herself, though ten minutes ago she had not cared whether or not there was a Wilton in the world. It was queer how determined she felt this: if Jane

must be blamed in great things she should stand clear of small.

Mrs. Wilton could be heard now, demanding of Adams in breathless gasps if Mrs. George Wilton were at home. The information that she was not was useless, and Adams, momentarily effaced by the drawing-room door, announced the visitors. Miss Egerton rose to receive them.

"How do you do, dear Mrs. Wilton?" Her voice was oiled with the serpent's guile; she kissed her connection-in-law lightly on both cheeks—yes, kissed her! "Quite well, I hope? What a bad horse you had in your hansom last night! I was sure he would kick before you got home. Do sit here on the sofa. Tea has just come in."

Mrs. Wilton stood rigid. Sarah was denying nothing; the shameless sight of last night had been no delusion.

"Where—" she said, but she was forced to pause for the breath horror had knocked out of her, "where is Jane?"

"I don't know." It was a truthful answer.

"She should be here. She should have come to me this morning with an explanation. She——"

"She was very tired last night," calmly. "She went out to get rid of a headache. Will you have cake or bread and butter?"

"Do you mean to say," said Mrs. Wilton, slowly, sternly, with a full stop after each word, "that you *were* in Piccadilly Circus last night, that we really saw you, with our own eyes? Oh, Amelia!" she turned her portentous gaze on her daughter.

Sarah softly and profanely hummed, "Oh, Louisa!"

"Of course it was," said she, opening her eyes innocently to meet Mrs. Wilton's stare. "Did you think I should say we were not there? Is that why you came to-day? You saw us."

"No, no. But Jane," severely, "Jane must be aware that only women of a—*a certain class* are seen at night in Piccadilly Circus!"

"You were there," meekly.

"Passing through, merely."

"We did not stay there all night."

Sarah laughed; no one would have known it was with iron determination, with a heart quaking for a step that did not come. "What did you think we were doing—camping out?"

Mrs. Wilton opened her mouth and shut it again. She was incapable of speech.

Sarah's voice, sweetly raised, lost all that uncalled-for mirth.

"It was so unfortunate! We had an accident. We were coming home from the theatre with old Mr. Osborne and Mrs. Osborne in a four-wheeler, and she became faint. The four-wheeler had no pneumatic tires. And the driver was drunk!"

Amelia sniffed.

"Yes, very drunk," with calm asseveration. "We were all obliged to get out, and they took the only hansom we could find. Of course, Mrs. Osborne had to be got home, and Mr. Osborne could not leave his fainting daughter-in-law. He was so distressed at having to desert us! We had to come home in another hansom, with a sober driver." Sarah was all the time wondering why she took this trouble to lie to people who to-morrow might be neither here nor there to her and Jane.

But the lies were a success. Mrs. Wilton and her daughter were calmed. They ate cake and drank much tea, as their due for the disappointment of not finding Jane and at finding Sarah ready with an explanation, even bold with one—for she dared much before they left. Mrs. Wilton said so, with a decent varnish, but finally she and her daughter departed amicably. Sarah, with huge relief, washed off the taste of Wilton cheek, that stung her lips a Judas red, and sat down. The horrible bell rang again.

"Mr. Hopkins, Mr. O'Hara," announced Adams.

Mr. Hopkins's appearance was as warlike as his unwarlike figure would permit; he wore depression and suspicion ostentatiously. But the eyes of O'Hara were troubled. At their

glance Sarah's only ray of consolation was that she had on her best and most becoming tea gown.

"We saw you—" Hopkins seated himself by her—"last night. How could you do such a thing?" He was really glaring at her. "And is your sister not here?" disagreeably.

For Hopkins Sarah had cared not at all, and the nameless aggression of his manner roused her to sudden battle. No Hopkins must be allowed to look like that, and so speak of Jane!

"Do what?" she asked, carelessly. "I think it is you who shouldn't have done it."

"But it was extraordinary—dreadful!"

"Who was dreadful! There were we, alone, after an adventure with a drunken driver, having to get out in Piccadilly Circus and forage for ourselves. And there were you, two selfish men in a hansom with a sober driver, and you never even offered him to us."

"We would have," Hopkins interposed, "but you ran! You went on an omnibus—a Putney omnibus." There was blood-curdling tragedy in his tone.

"We had no time to offer you our hansom," began O'Hara. "You were so quick, so very, very quick, as if you wanted—" he paused.

Sarah was regarding him intently. He avoided his doom by that pause. Not so Mr. Hopkins, who rushed on his.

"We were sure you did not want us to see you," he said, unpleasantly.

"As if we should mind what *you* saw us do!" Sarah made that "you" scathing. "And why, then, did you come here to-day?" she inquired, with the air of her late visitor. "We were most unhappy last night. We did not like the streets, or the men—they stared at us. But as for you—"

"Of course they did," said Hopkins, gruffly. "How horrible for you both!" The "both" was added to appease Sarah; but he thought of bold, bad men staring at his beloved Jane, and felt quite ill.

"And you drove on," said Sarah,

softly. "You did not care enough about us to get out of your hansom." Her voice was icy. "We had been dining out, we were very tired, and at least you could have got us a hansom." She thought as she said it, "What fools we were not to stay still and make them get one." Then she thought it wise to thaw. "And we were a little—a little frightened." Could Mrs. Wilton have heard that gentle, cooing voice!

"Your sister goes out a great deal," said Hopkins, suddenly, "for a person who dislikes it. She refused to go to the theatre with *me*!"

"What do you mean?" Sarah's eyes were too childlike, too wide.

"I mean I was at the Lyceum on Saturday night."

"Well," she looked really babyish, "Jane was not, though I suppose she had a right to be if she had wanted to."

"In the Duke of Alte-Henneberg's box," drily, "with three men and no women! I must say I was surprised!"

"Then you wasted an emotion," returned Sarah, very quietly, "on our cousin, Mrs. Osborne. Jane would not speak to a man like the Duke; she couldn't, because she doesn't know him. But I suppose even Jane can't help what Mrs. Osborne does. Do you imagine she would take the trouble to lie—to you—about going to a theatre? She has no need!" (With a sister to do it for her.)

"Mrs. Osborne!" Hopkins gasped. "Was that Mrs. Osborne? Then—oh, that explains it! I—I couldn't get near; I'd no glass; and I never thought your sister could have that manner—with a man like Alte-Henneberg. I—can you forgive me for being such a fool?" His countenance had assumed the expression of the villain of a piece when his villainy is brought home to him. Even Sarah was mollified by his crestfallen, guilty face.

"Oh, what does it matter?" she said. "But last night—we had a dreadful time last night! I'm—I'm so wretched to-day!"

Emotion was in her voice, and

O'Hara longed for a screen that he might humble himself and kiss her hand in secret. Hopkins in humiliation was calling himself by every name, when the drawing-room door was flung open—not by Adams.

A man, tall, clean-shaven, grimly handsome, stood in the doorway. Sarah, behind Hopkins's back, clutched O'Hara by the arm.

"Go! Take him away!" she said, not above her breath; but he heard. "Go quick!"

To this day Mr. Hopkins does not know why he did not wait for Mrs. Wilton, or for his tea. He was so instantly out on the landing, hat in hand, that he never dreamed O'Hara put him there. He did not look at O'Hara, or he would have seen that he was deadly pale, as pale as Sarah left behind—Sarah, who, as the door closed behind Hopkins's unconscious back, stood staring at the Background! If a mind can jabber, hers did it then.

"Here! He's here! What brings him here? What shall I do? What shall I do?"

XV

OLD Lord de Fort stared. He put up his eyeglass and stared again; then he tittered. He always tittered when affairs—other people's affairs—looked involved. The crush in which Lady Lanark was exploiting her visiting list suddenly became so interesting as to obviate the heat of it and the treading on his lordship's gouty toe. "Mrs. Osborne," he reflected, "*without* Mr. Van Ingen! Mr. Van Ingen, *with* Miss Delabere! There have been events. Gad! She couldn't have been fool enough to refuse him!" And he studied Mrs. Osborne's face.

It was not as usual, though for his life he could not tell what made the change in it. She had not refused the American prince, or she would not glance furtively at his immaculate back. The Delabere girl—he looked at her—was pretty, seventeen and not clever. "Lord, Lord!" said de Fort, piously, "she must have given him

too much caviare to make him fly to jam! raspberry jam," unkindly—for the Delabere cheeks were dyed with elation. "I shall see this through." He trotted down-stairs and employed half an hour in the hall, outside the tea-room door.

Mrs. Osborne, with the Duke of Alte-Henneberg in tow, passed him so closely that her gown brushed him. She was not hearing a word the Duke of Alte-Henneberg said, and she never saw Lord de Fort at all. She looked as lovely as a painting, and as hard. He saw now where the change was in her. Her scarlet, triumphant lips were straight shut. She looked driven.

"Do you mind letting me pass?" The voice took no pains to be civil, and Lord de Fort started.

It was Van Ingen, at Mrs. Osborne's heels. His little idea had been erroneous, and he hated to waste an idea. To try and save it he hastened after the man who had shoved past him—and obtained nothing whatever for his pains.

Eaton Place is no distance from Eaton Square. Mrs. Osborne and her German Highness were slowly descending the steps to walk the short way between Lady Lanark's door and hers. Mr. Van Ingen, not a yard from them, jumped hastily into his smart private hansom and gave an order Lord de Fort did not hear.

Mrs. Osborne heard—and never changed her step nor flickered an eyelid. It was no concern of hers, apparently, where Mr. Van Ingen went. She went home, and stayed at home. As for the Delabere girl, she never gave a thought to her. But Lord de Fort remembered afterward that she had looked very ill at the Lanark tea.

Never in all her life had Mrs. Osborne dressed as she dressed that evening for her solitary dinner. She dismissed gown after gown. They were too pale, too meek. She must have color to-night; must "go proud in scarlet, brave in red." She was like a pale flame when she was dressed; her very servants gaped at her beauty

as she sat alone in her dining-room, her gown a heart of color to the sombre gold-embroidered hangings. But for all the red of it she was cold. Jane Wilton would have ordered a fire and crouched over it, regardless that the night was June, and suffocating. Mrs. Osborne sat still, a woman in pale scarlet, all alone at a table decked with dull orchids, warm with red light from the shaded candles that flickered in the air from the open window. As she had sat still when the servants were in the room she was still when they were gone—with the stillness of a wild animal that will not stir one way or the other for fear of a hidden trap. Surely there could be no trap for Mrs. Osborne, the reigning beauty of a set that was small because there can be but one top layer of eggs in a basket. Her beauty was unaltered, her money undoubted. But her lover had not spoken to her that afternoon; he had spent his time with a girl, though his set ignored girls. It was not what he had done, but the reason of his doing it that made Mrs. Osborne's lips hard-set.

She looked up at the clock, though she knew the time, since her heart had ticked true to every second of it. Half-past nine! She would give him till midnight. He had never come to her house alone at night, never uninvited; but if he loved her he would do both to-night. The candles shot up leaping flames in the sudden draught from the door; Mrs. Osborne's heart leaped to match them, leaped almost out of her body. Yet she only lifted her eyes with a little, slighting glance.

"Mr. Van Ingen," said the butler. If the butler was surprised she did not care.

Miles was in the doorway, very tall against the brilliant hall behind him. It was odd that instead of looking at his face she only thought what a curious "lamplight effect" he made, standing there with white light behind him and red candlelight on the black and white of his evening clothes.

The butler closed the door softly.

Perhaps he had not noticed that neither his mistress nor Mr. Van Ingen had said one word. But it was Van Ingen who could not speak.

"What came ye out for to see?" They were old words, and not usual in society, but they came into his head. Whatever he had come to see it was not this: Mrs. Osborne like a flame so incandescent that the burn of it would feel cold, seated at her dinner table among her everyday surroundings, with a plate and coffee and fruit before her, with quiet eyes that met his with—was it wonder, or—something else? He did not know.

"Is anything the matter?" she said, tranquilly. "You don't see a ghost, do you?" Will you have some *Bénédictine* or anything?" She was miles away from him, unapproachable.

Bénédictine! It dawned on him that he had not dined. He had been too angry, too appalled. But the woman he was angry with was still at the last stage of her unexceptionable dinner. The small thought found his tongue for him.

"I forgot dinner." He stopped her with a sharp gesture as she would have rung a silver bell. "I—for God's sake tell me why you said you went to Hastings last night."

Mrs. Osborne's head went back a little, slowly. She had never seen him like this; she did not know if she loved him so—or hated him. She answered as if she did neither.

"I said I was going. I didn't go. Why?"

"You weren't here."

"I wasn't here. You're quite right. I met my Hastings protégée," her voice was too even to be mocking, "at the station. I dined with her, I got home about midnight. After this afternoon I don't see why this catechism. My movements did not apparently concern you then."

"I couldn't trust myself to go near you," sulkily. "I wouldn't believe my eyes when I saw you last evening driving along the Brompton Road in a hansom. You were vilely dressed, and different, somehow. But I knew it was you."

"It was I, certainly. Aren't you going to sit down? You are not at the bar of justice, even though I seem to be." It was not her words that made him look at her, but something in the way she said them. Something critical behind her coldness came suddenly home to him.

"I'm a brute, but I've been half-mad. When you think a woman like the stars it's a jar to see her in the sort of clothes she never wears, and a thick veil—if she's told you she'd be in the country! And there's more—I can't tell you all, it's too confused. That cousin of yours, I saw her one night when you'd told me she was going away with you—saw her at a music hall, with—well, Lord knows whom she was with! I saw a man speak to her. And last night—I thought if you had changed your mind and stayed in town you'd be at the Glastonburys', and you weren't there. I only stayed ten minutes. I went along Piccadilly—and stood like a fool, till the woman I thought was you jumped on an omnibus! But that wasn't you, like—"

Mrs. Osborne interrupted him:

"If it had been I—what of it?"

"There is no need to tell you," said Van Ingen. "But—it wasn't! I know that, or I couldn't tell you the rest. I went to supper at a woman's flat in West Kensington. And she was—I wasn't civil to her; I wasn't in a civil temper—"

"And you wreaked it," softly, "on a poor soul like that!" It did not dawn on him that he had not said the woman was not a lady; Mrs. Osborne had never needed the *i's* of conversation dotted.

"I did nothing of the kind," sullenly. "But she turned on me and said she was as good as the woman I was so hit with. That if I chose to go up-stairs I would see my fine Mrs. Osborne, with the men who came home with her each time she came to her flat. And she gave me the dates of her coming."

"Did you go up-stairs?" said Mrs. Osborne, gently.

Van Ingen's face burned dully.

"She was a woman; I couldn't knock her down. I went home. But—it bit me to the bone."

He had never moved from where he stood since the first gesture that had stopped her from ringing the bell. Mrs. Osborne looked at him, and every line of the face that she loved seemed new to her.

"Miles," she said, slowly, "if I had ten flats in Kensington should you think me the sort of woman to take men to them?"

"No," he said. He came toward her and held out his hands. "Forgive me, and let it go."

But she went on as if she had not heard, as if she did not see the strong, fine hands she loved.

"Let us suppose a case," she said. "If I were not Mrs. Osborne, but a woman who masqueraded in her shoes, who did so to see you, to be with you; if I had been a woman with a husband, who had never had a thought of him beyond living in peace and paying his bills; who, as his wife, could never have come in touch with you; who longed to live a little, to get out of the deadly, dull *milieu* that belonged to her, then you could treat me as you treat me now—or would you?"

He was staring at her, his face perplexed, half-suspicious. But as he stared it cleared, though not to laughter. It was not the woman he loved he thought of, but Mrs. Osborne, the run-after, the pink of fashion, the season's success. Not a man in town but envied him his place at her side, her use of his carriages. And it was she, the unapproachable, the woman he had known for years, Osborne's widow, who asked him this. He had brought it on himself, for he had insulted her; but he would insult her no more by letting her imagine he could care for such a woman as she had pictured.

"All that," he said, quickly, "would not be *you*! I never could have loved a woman like that."

"You would not," she smiled securely, "let her get a divorce and then marry her?" In her mind was

that insane adoration of Jane Wilton for the Background who was Mrs. Osborne's Miles Van Ingen.

"A woman like that would not expect me to marry her!"

"But—if she did? if she came and told you all she had done to make you care for her, even to pretending to be someone else whose husband was dead?"

He had Puritan ancestors as well as Knickerbocker, and they spoke in him now; he did not often give them an opportunity.

"I won't have you draw yourself into supposititious cases like this. My wife won't be a divorced woman. I won't have you put yourself into any such woman's place." He had thought of her in a worse place this very day, but she did not say so.

"If she loved you enough not to care for divorce—or marriage! Would you take her? would you take me if I were what I've been saying?" For if he had been as bad, and worse, she would have gone with him gladly, happier to have his love, even if he beat her, than to have married a king.

"You mean," slowly, "if you were an impostor?"

The word was electric. Mrs. Osborne's hand caught the table sharply, as if the solid wood were a support.

"An impostor!" He had never seen her pale before. Now her lips showed like new blood spilled on the lips of the dead. "An impostor? I didn't mean quite that. I only meant a woman who had lied about her circumstances, her relations—not herself. Could you love me if I were like that?"

For a moment he stood bewildered; then he knew it was only anger in her face. He came close to her, masterful, not to be denied. He knelt beside her, his dark, smooth head against her shoulder, his arms locked round her loveliness.

"Don't," he whispered, "don't!" I deserve you to score off me. I was mad to-day, but you've made me pay for what I dared think of you. Sweetheart, don't say any more such things. I know you could not lie. I'd sooner

see you dead than insult you by thinking you could deceive me in even the littlest way." His voice must have thrilled to her soul, for her hands gripped him desperately. "You couldn't be like that, even for love. Don't you know that women who are liars can't love? They can't be true."

"You mean all that?" Her voice was sharp, insistent.

"All that. Don't punish me any more, though I deserve it. I've something still to confess. I did doubt you. I went to West Kensington to-day."

"Well?" said Mrs. Osborne, as tranquilly as if she had known it.

"Well," his clasp loosened as he leaned back to look her in the face, "your cousin's affairs are no business of mine, except that I won't have it said that she lived with my wife. When I ask for Mrs. Wilton, as that cursed woman below stairs told me, and find Miss Egerton, I can't help drawing my own conclusions. Especially when I don't find her alone."

Mrs. Osborne got up. She was curiously magnificent; her beauty went home to him as it had never done before. All the light in the room seemed centred on her marvellous face, the pale scarlet of her gown, as she stood tall beside him.

"Miles, I want a little spade truth," she said, slowly, and her voice was the voice he had heard her use only to say she loved him; it came soft and slow like melted lava, as warm and as dangerous. She made no effort whatever to defend her cousin. "You have found your Mrs. Wilton, as you would never have found me. But if I were Mrs. Wilton—I don't mean *pour rire*, but really married to a Wilton, a middle-class man in a marching regiment—and had come up to town to a poor little flat and written to you to come and see me, would you have come? Would it have been all like this?"

He laughed. He was besotted by her beauty, her sumptuousness. The spade truth was a joke, like the rest of her words, but if she wanted it she should have it.

"I'd have come, yes. Once!"

"When you had found me surrounded by middle-class relations, a mother-in-law, sisters, what would you have done next?"

"Gone away," promptly. "We're talking truth to-night; I'll tell you anything. When I first saw you this year I'd completely forgotten you. If you had not been Mrs. Osborne, and the fashion, I don't think I'd have ever thought of you as I have. It wouldn't have occurred to me. You wouldn't have come in my way, don't you see? If I had fallen in love with you, I—well, I wouldn't have asked you to run away with me and have a divorce! I've no fancy for shopworn goods in women or anything else."

"You wouldn't have lent me your carriages, or your kind countenance at balls?"

"Carriages! Oh, that, if you liked, certainly! But I didn't mean that sort of meaningless politeness. I meant marrying. I—" and he laughed—"I certainly never would have thought of passing through the fire and soot of the divorce court to marry you. I always want the pick of the basket, like Mrs. Osborne!"

"Then you only love me for my success—my vogue. Oh, Miles!" mockingly.

"Oh, well, I dare say that had something to do with it. I wouldn't have loved Mrs. Wilton *pour rien* or anything else. By the way, you will really have to tell your cousin—the text of all this—that she can't come here any more. I won't have you mixed up with doubtful Mrs. Wiltons."

"She won't come—after to-day," very quietly. "She is not really Mrs. Wilton, though. She——"

"I don't care who she is, so long as you are Mrs. Osborne—though I'm not content with her, I want Mrs. Van Ingen." And éclat and envy, and the great beauty of the season. But he did not say so.

"I'm rather tired of Mrs. Osborne myself." She laughed lightly. "And you're right—there's no need for her to last much longer. But," she

paused, looked long and long at him, "she's been a very happy woman!"

"She'll be happier yet," he whispered, and the words sounded fatuous.

"I think she will." She said it with deliberation. "I think she will. She will be clearer-sighted, leading you no more will-o'-the-wisp chases. Miles, do you know that it is nearly the middle of the night? Say good-bye to me and go."

His kiss was quick—so quick that it hurt her soul. Miles Van Ingen had made many scars in women's lives, but he had scarred one woman's soul.

"It's more good-bye than you think. I have to go away to-morrow—not your kind of going away, but really. I won't be back for a week."

From the weary, longing sound in her voice she might have said, "I won't be back for eternity." She turned to him with a sudden passionate vehemence.

"I wonder if you really love me?"

He looked at her. He did not like the tone.

"Don't expect me to be too constant to—" he paused—"to Mrs. Van Ingen. I am a wayfarer. I believe now that no other woman ever could appeal to me. I'm new, life is new, and I've got money, and that is good—sufficient for the present—with you."

"Don't tell me bare truths now—don't you know that a man should never tell the truth to the woman who loves him?"

"You are not a fool." She stiffened. "The world is my country—this is only an interlude. I shall want to go out from civilization again, to feel the sea, the wind across the prairies, to camp out, to kill things."

She gave a little gasp.

"To kill things!" she repeated.

"I could go with you."

"No. Then I should cease to love you. I could not see you roughing it—in serge and thick boots. I wouldn't want you then. You aren't calico."

"I'm chiffon?"

He nodded.

Mrs. Osborne was finding things out. The lion was killing himself, and the killing was merciless. He took her hands—he did not notice that there was something wanting in their touch. As to the glance of her eyes—he did not see the sword in them. He had left the wilderness of doubt, had reached the pleasant country of certainty, had forgotten that there were enemies. If Mrs. Osborne had looked at him before with worship, she did not do so now. "Good-bye," she said, "good-bye!"

When he had left her she rang for her housekeeper. Perhaps the woman had been prepared for the order she received, for she showed no surprise.

XVI

"JANE," said Mrs. Wilton, heavily, "you never told me that your Mrs. Osborne was the Beauty, or that Lady Jane Mandeville is her godmother. Mrs. Osborne cannot be flighty if Lady Jane has anything to do with her."

"Quite right," said Sarah, with approval. "Lady Jane is too heavy for flight."

Mrs. Wilton merely sniffed. Sarah was too frivolous about the aristocracy—to speak in such a way about the daughter of a nobleman!

"That, Jane," she said, pointedly, "explains Mrs. Osborne's success to me. Sarah cannot be expected to understand the undercurrents of English society. When a woman has a member of the aristocracy for her godmother she can attain anything."

Jane started. She looked pale, unlike herself, and had been staring round her mother-in-law's room as if she were surprised to find herself once more in that chaste retreat. She said nothing, and Mrs. Wilton put down her knitting and gazed at her.

"I really think, Jane, you should have told me. I should have called. Politeness demands something from

us. Mrs. Osborne has been so useful to you and Sarah."

"She hasn't been useful to me," said Sarah, sharply. "I never could bear her!" She glanced hastily at her sister, behind Mrs. Wilton's back, and amended, hastily, "At least, I mean I never could bear her to do anything for me."

"Don't you think I ought to call on her, Jane?" demanded Mrs. Wilton.

Jane looked taken aback. Her voice was the voice of one appalled as she faltered forth an answer.

"I think it would be very nice of you, but you had better wait a few days. Mrs. Osborne is—has gone away."

"It would be nice for you to meet the aristocracy," said Sarah.

"But she will return," said Mrs. Wilton, who never replied to Sarah when she could possibly avoid it. "You said you were going to dine there on Monday next. How can you dine there if she is away?"

"We were asked to amuse old Mr. Osborne while his daughter-in-law was away," returned Sarah, with a righteous air.

"But on Tuesday Sarah said she was taking you both to the play," put in Amelia, disapprovingly. She was the unfortunate possessor of worldly yearnings and virtuous pretensions.

"I said old Mr. Osborne was," firmly.

It was Saturday afternoon and very hot. Jane and Sarah had lunched with their relatives on hot mutton and warm custard pudding. Mrs. Wilton always gave them mutton; she said it was so wholesome. Jane had muttered something about leaving early, but her mother-in-law had returned firmly that to go out at half-past two on a hot day was to court sunstroke, and that a nice rest in a quiet house would do dear Jane good. Dear Jane got as near the window as she could; the room reeked of mutton fat, and grew hotter. Small wonder, perhaps, that Mrs. George Wilton waxed paler and paler, as people do

from heat and also from hopeless straining after something that will not come.

At last—blessed signal of release—tea was brought in. Sarah sat up and grinned openly; even Jane looked as if the worst were past; but not for long. As Mrs. Wilton poured out the tea she also poured forth on the subject of Mrs. Osborne.

"It is of no use, Jane, your trying to put me off calling on her." She spoke suspiciously. "It will seem strange to her that you have no relations by marriage, if you have not mentioned us; if you have, she will doubtless wonder we have not recognized her. Now, don't say any more to prevent me. I shall call upon her on Monday afternoon. If she is away still—" the sniff was openly incredulous—"I suppose she will get our cards when she comes home. Mr. Hopkins also wishes to go."

"Mr. Hopkins!" Jane and Sarah spoke together.

"Yes; what is so extraordinary in that? I have seen you so little lately that I suppose you do not know he has called twice. He has been most polite, and so interested in Mrs. Osborne that I have promised to ask her to tea as a sort of recognition—asking you and him also. Mr. Hopkins has seen your cousin, in the distance, and thinks her like you, Jane, but much handsomer! We all know you do not pretend to be a beauty."

Sarah's lips quivered violently. She put up her hand and covered her mouth.

"Sarah," exclaimed Mrs. Wilton, "how funny you are looking! Just as if you were going to be seasick."

Sarah emitted a strange sound between a cough and a growl.

"I do feel rather ill. I think I had better go home, Jane."

"The air will do you good," said her sister, promptly.

"Perhaps so," observed Mrs. Wilton. "Well, Jane, I shall call on Mrs. Osborne on Monday."

"Do you wish me to go, too?" There was a queer change on Mrs. George Wilton's face since that men-

tion of Mr. Hopkins. "Or will Mr. Hopkins escort you?"

"I shall go alone. Mr. Hopkins meant, I think, to go to-day. He was to be introduced by Mr. Van Ingen."

"Mr. Van Ingen is in Paris," Jane drawled, indifferently.

"He returned this morning," briskly. "If you knew him, Jane, you would know that."

"Oh!" said Jane.

Mrs. Wilton swelled with the triumph of knowledge.

"Yes, he has returned. And I owe it to you, Jane, as your only relative of any position here—I do not count Americans—to give a little fête to Mrs. Osborne and any friends of hers you may have met. Besides, she has been so useful to you that she might—who knows?—be useful to Amelia. I wonder you did not suggest Amelia to her! She might at least send her brother-in-law, Mr. Howard K. Osborne, to call."

"Did Mr. Hopkins tell you about him, too?" said Jane, grimly.

"No, I spoke of him, and it seems to me that Mr. Hopkins said—"

"He merely said, 'Oh!'" put in Amelia. "I knew at once he did not think much of Mr. Howard K. Osborne. He changed the subject."

"Of course, my dear Amelia—" Mrs. Wilton beamed—"he would have his prejudices. Besides, if I remember, I thought your interest in Mr. Howard K. Osborne a little—a little marked. Mr. Hopkins would naturally resent it."

"Very naturally," commented Jane. She wished viciously that Amelia would marry Hopkins; he might yet be saved as by fire. She stood a minute by the tea table, and it was well that her relations-in-law had never seen her in a rage.

"Come, Sarah," she said, "we must go now. Amelia, may I see the *Standard* for a minute? Oh, you take the *Morning Post*. That will do as well. Thank you."

She glanced at it, and put it down. "Good-bye. We'll see you on Tuesday," she called back over her shoul-

der, gaily, as she left the room. "Then you can tell us what you think of Mrs. Osborne."

Once they were outside she drew a long breath.

"What are you going to do?" said Sarah, in an awe-struck whisper. "You will have to do something. Oh, let me get home! I could not stand the strain when your mother-in-law harped on Mrs. Osborne. Come and find an omnibus. Oh, I could kill Mr. Hopkins! He's a sneak, and we told him about old Mr. Osborne!"

"Omnibus!" scathingly. Jane took no thought for the sinning Hopkins. "Hansom. Can't you see we must be quick? I hate houses where they don't have tea till five." She settled her thick white-lace veil over her mouth; it was as impervious as a mask, and nearly as stifling. "Hurry!" She waved her parasol with command to the nearest hansom and pushed her sister in. "*Morning Post* office, Wellington street," she adjured the cabman. "Drive fast," and she sank down beside Sarah. "I hope," she added, grimly, "that he'll drive like the devil!"

"Jane!" shrieked the scandalized Sarah.

"Half-past five," returned Jane, irrelevantly. "We'll just do it."

"Do what? Why are you going to a newspaper office?"

"Don't you see they are determined to go and call on Mrs. Osborne?" fiercely. "I don't mind that, because she could be away. But I won't have that sneaking little Hopkins *find me out!* And I know he will, if I don't choke him off by Monday. And we were so nice to him, too!"

"We ate his dinners!" said Sarah, with injury at his ingratitude. "And he always had joint."

"If I'm found out I'm ruined. And I won't be ruined now, with nothing to show for it. I can only think of one thing that will save me. I got all ready for it when Mrs. Osborne gave up her house and went away. I thought of it when I paid

the butler. *Mrs. Osborne must die!*" Jane's voice was hollow.

"Where? how?" demanded Sarah. "She can't. She's too much of a celebrity."

"That won't keep her alive. I shall write the notice in the *Morning Post* office, and if we are there before six it will be in on Monday morning." She dragged out her watch. "Oh, I forgot it was slow. It's ten minutes to six now. Tell him to drive faster, do!"

"But we can't kill her." Sarah was almost tearful. "She'd be so angry if she found out. Why can't she have something infectious, or just go away? We can't kill her."

"I'm not going to stay in bed, that's why. How could she have anything infectious if I didn't? And there's more. Van Ingen's back."

"But what will you do without her?"

"I'm done with her."

"But Mr. Howard K. Osborne will have to go into mourning. He can't take me to things."

"It's old Mr. Osborne who's going to be in mourning," grimly. "Sarah, this man is crawling."

"Where?" Sarah was always prepared for anything. "Not on top of the hansom? He'll be killed if he does that."

"No, idiot, no!" looking forth distractedly. "Oh, now we are blocked!"

They were, at the corner of Regent Circus, and a stream of omnibuses directed by a policeman was surging past their horse's nose. Would they never get on?

"We shall be late, I know we shall!" moaned the miserable Jane, who knew that the misdeeds of a Beauty—and a daughter-in-law—live forever. "There is so little time, and nothing can save me but the *Morning Post*. Nothing else can make Miles Van Ingen wish he were dead," viciously, "but to lose his Mrs. Osborne unstained and untarnished. Go round!" she shouted through the little door in the roof. "Don't wait to get through the block."

It wanted four minutes to six when

they alighted at the office of the *Morning Post* and tore up the stairs.

"After this," panted Jane, "I will never tell another lie. But I will not be found out—by a Mrs. Wilton, a Hopkins and a Van Ingen!" Could the Background only have heard himself being lumped in with a husband's friends and relations!

The notice was written and paid for. The murderers went down to the Strand and got into an omnibus, and Jane Wilton was almost as pale as if she, instead of Mrs. Osborne, were death-stricken.

That evening Mrs. Wilton sat reflecting.

"It is my opinion," she said, "that Jane and Sarah do not wish us to know Mrs. Osborne. They are afraid of her taking us up, especially you, Amelia. Either they are jealous or else Mrs. Osborne is flighty. Yes, now I come to think of it I have no doubt Mrs. Osborne is flighty, if not mad. I heard she kept the Prince waiting to dance with her till he was so angry he shook the dust off his feet and went home"—what dust was immaterial. "I must find out. I shall call there early on Monday. If only to-morrow were not Sunday! I suppose it would not do to make a first call on Sunday, would it, Amelia?"

"No, certainly not, mamma."

Amelia could not be defied. But the hours of the Sabbath were long to Mrs. Wilton, and Monday morning was welcome.

She was still at her toilet when Amelia rushed into her room bearing a newspaper.

"Listen! listen!" she shrieked.

Suddenly, of heart failure, at Basley, Jane Osborne, *née* Egerton, widow of R. Osborne, Esq., of Virginia. No flowers. The remains will be taken to America for interment.

"How annoying! how disappointing! how dreadful!" exclaimed Mrs. Wilton. "And I can't send any flowers, which would have been a nice little surprising kindness to old Mr. Osborne. I could have sent quite a nice wreath for five shillings, or perhaps

four and nine. And now old Mr. Osborne will be too depressed for a time to do anything for *you*, even if he does not accompany the body to America. And young Mr. Osborne will not be able to call, so it is of no use to trouble about sending your father to leave cards in Eaton Place. But—" she hesitated—"Amelia, Providence is all-powerful and so wise. Perhaps it is for the best. Mr. Hopkins seemed unduly interested in Mrs. Osborne." She gazed thoughtfully at the *Morning Post*. "Basley. I don't know where that is. It seems extraordinary to die there when she could have had her funeral from Eaton Place. She must, Amelia, she must have been flighty."

XVII

"Nor at home?" said Mr. Hopkins, blankly. "Not at home! Oh, I suppose on account of mourning."

"That, sir," returned Adams, calmly, "and of going to America. My mistress starts this evening. I was to say it was most unlikely she could see you before she went."

"America!" said Mr. Hopkins, but it was to the shut door. Was it a delusion, or did he hear the voice of O'Hara from the paradise that was denied to him? As he fumed down the steps he decided it was a delusion. As he gained the street a man jumped out of a hansom, and Mr. Hopkins, too, jumped.

"Wilton!" he gasped. "Why—where—" feebly—"I'm delighted to see you. But you're just in time. Your wife's going to America this afternoon."

"So am I," said George Wilton, calmly. "Good-day." And he flew up the stairs.

As his voice was heard at the door Miss Sarah Egerton seized Mr. O'Hara by the arm.

"Kitchen," she said, firmly. "Quick! Oh, thank heaven I telegraphed!"

Jane Wilton stood among her half-packed trunks and swayed.

"George!" she said. "George!" She looked at him as if she had never seen him before. And had she ever seen him before? Was he always bronzed, clean-cut, hawk-eyed—or had she been deliberately blind? And his clothes, his immaculate coat and boots, his distinguished air as he paused for one second in the doorway. This was the man she had called middle-class and lumped in with his relations. This! He had never seemed so desirable, so utterly—

He turned, deliberately closed the door behind Adams, and smiled.

Mrs. George Wilton backed sharply till the wall stopped her. He would never kiss her again—when she told him. It was better to refuse kisses than to have them denied you.

"You've never even said you were glad to see me," remarked Captain Wilton, politely. "Aren't you?"

How tall he was, and he wore that pin she gave him; and he wasn't a bit like the Wiltons, not like any one of them. And—she had been a fool all her days and now she must pay for it. But glad! It was all she could do not to run to him and hide her head on his breast. But she stood still.

"Don't come near me," she muttered. For a second his face was blank. "I've—I've been doing dreadful things! I've been telling lies, and being a Beauty, and——"

"You were always a Beauty," consideringly. "And—I've known you to tell lies. Is that why I'm not to come near you?"

"I've been pretending to be Mrs. Osborne—Jane Osborne—you know," sullenly. "You don't know all I've done. You wouldn't be here if you did."

"It's just what I would be," composedly. "I've always wanted to see a murderer. Come here, Mrs. Osborne, and let me look at you."

"You know! Who told you?"

"Well," calmly, "it was Sarah. She kept writing and telegraphing till I thought I'd come home. I came overland from Marseilles, and she thoughtfully kept me amused all the

way by telegrams. She sent a frantic one to the Métropole this morning. I think it was about America." He moved toward her, but he did not look at her. "I think," affably—and this did him credit, for he was afraid of something in her face—"I know all your crimes."

"You don't," she muttered. "You don't. I got frantic at The Cedars; I got tired of you; I—I went up to town and was Mrs. Osborne because Miles Van Ingen was in London, and I wanted to see him and make him think I was grand."

"I hope he did."

"George, don't laugh. Be angry. But you will be in a minute. I—I thought I always loved him; I never could forget him, he was always a shadowy third between you and me——"

"And did you find him a substantial one?" quietly.

Jane straightened herself desperately.

"I forgot all about you for two months," she said, dully—it is not pleasant to own you have found cheese-cake gingerbread. "I adored him—I used to kiss him—I——"

"I always thought you could be dangerous," calmly. "Is that all?"

But she went on as if she had not heard him.

"I thought I'd get a divorce and marry him."

"I won't make any defense," said the wronged one, blandly.

Jane leaped toward him like a leopard. Her eyes were blazing, her pale-azalea cheeks scarlet.

"Don't talk like that; you sha'n't dare! I'm not like that. I kept finding out little things and seeing clearer and clearer, and—George, he didn't love me at all; it was Mrs. Osborne! And I couldn't bear it," incoherently. "I'm just as good-looking and just as nice as Mrs. Osborne; and I hated him—and so I killed her to get her out of his way and make him miserable because she was dead."

"You dear little devil!" said Captain George Wilton, son of Colonel and Mrs. Wilton of The Cedars.

"But," said Mrs. Wilton, humbly, half an hour afterward, "some one might come in—and you're sitting on Mrs. Osborne's clothes. And I want to know what we are going to do. I don't suppose I can stay in London."

"It mightn't be exactly wise," cheerfully. "Suppose we go to New York. You know you really ought to square it with Jane Osborne. She may hang you, of course, for killing her, but——"

"I've squared her. She knew all along, except of course that she had to die. I never did anything to get her into trouble, really; that was the reason I kept away from the American Minister's and wouldn't be presented."

"Good heavens!" faintly. "I—I mean you were extremely prudent."

"And Mr. Van Ingen," she stammered over the name she had been wont to swear by, "never saw her."

"He'll be pleased when he does!" Neither knew which laughed first.

"George, she's a dear, and old Osborne did leave me a million. But oh, her figure!"

"I was thinking of her nose," meekly. "Oh, Jane!"

"And I've spent an awful lot of money, being her. And George——"

"What?"

"Winnie Wellwood lives below us."

"The devil she does! Good Lord! we'll go to New York at once. For goodness' sake, Jane, let me get at the packing."

"I suppose," said Sarah, leaning against the kitchen sink, "we can go back now. The front door's wide open, and Adams can't adorn the landing forever."

"Two minutes more won't hurt her." O'Hara leaned against the gas stove; it was well that the thoughtful Adams had put it out. "You've never answered me."

"I can't." It was a desperate Sarah, with a hard-set mouth. "I'd have to tell you things, and they'd be dishonorable if I told. And if you knew them, you wouldn't——"

Mr. O'Hara lounged a little on his well-blackened support.

"If you mean about Mrs. Osborne," he said, languidly, "I've known all along; ever since the Astons' dance. I had to go—couldn't get out of it; and I saw her. I suppose she died to get the change out of Van Ingen. He wasn't fit, you know, to black her shoes. I always knew she'd find it out. I'm very fond of Jane," sweetly.

But Sarah was speechless.

"I rather helped, too." O'Hara had left the stove. "Dearest Sarah, you don't know what a struggle it was not to stay behind, the day Van Ingen came sniffing round here, and punch his head. And then there was Urmston." Sarah's teeth really chattered. "After that night, you know, I met him. And he was rather nasty—or he tried to be! I shut him up, and—he called me Captain Wilton."

"What—did—you—do?" She was white with shame.

"Oh, I'd never shatter a healthy illusion," calmly. "I'd have played up to being the Czar if it would have helped you. I knew what you'd been doing, if no one else did. I thought I'd help you save the show," simply.

"Billy, I love you," said Sarah, solemnly. "And I'll tell you now. Aunt Adela Egerton brought us up on thin bread and thinner butter, but she fed us, and she sent me to school. She kept Jane at home to write notes and mend lace and feed the prize poultry, and that was how Jane knew Mr. Van Ingen and I didn't. And Aunt Adela's daughter was named Jane, too. She had only one; she was nice and fat, and hated her mother, and never stayed with her. She made a grand marriage, and the man's name was Osborne. He had heaps of money, and when he died he left us a lot. I always thought his wife made him; she liked Jane. But what put it into Jane's head to be her was Newport. Aunt Adela took us there, just after her own Jane's engagement was announced; and for two days people fell over each other being civil to the wrong Jane. And then Aunt Adela aired herself, and the bubble

burst. But Jane had found out the difference, and I suppose she thought she'd like to be some one again. She—she wanted to enjoy herself," fiercely; "she never had had much of a life, her money came too late. Mrs. George Wilton, in Eaton Place, with rows of Wiltons glaring at everything she did—well, you can see for yourself that Dick Osborne's widow, with Dick Osborne's fortune, wouldn't be quite as pale a joy! But I never liked *him*—" incoherently—"I knew she wouldn't either, if she had her head. There were little things, I can't tell you—but he loved Mrs. Osborne, not Jane."

"What!" O'Hara let her go suddenly, "what on earth is that?"

"It's a woman!" gasped his beloved. "Oh, move! It's the Wiltons—they can't come in—George and Jane may be fighting! Besides, they don't know he's come home."

She flew to the door, with O'Hara, big and burly, behind her, and stood appalled. In the front doorway stood Mr. Van Ingen; behind him, the worse for wear and striving madly to pass him, Miss Wellwood.

"Is it true?" said Van Ingen. "What does this woman mean, if it is?"

"True, that she's dead?" shrieked Miss Wellwood, contemptuously. She dived under his arm and pointed to the open door of the drawing-room. "Let me go in and look. I saw her, I tell you, last night."

"Go away, you nasty wretch!" gasped the sturdy Adams. "How dare you come here?"

"I want to see Mrs. Wilton. I know she's here—and Thompson," wildly, "won't speak to me because he says I told him lies about her. Let me in."

"Did anyone ask for me?" said a bland and manly voice from the drawing-room door. "Or was it my wife?"

Miss Wellwood's arm dropped paralyzed; the released Adams reeled against O'Hara's legs, and incidentally bumped Sarah violently.

"You!" said Miss Wellwood. She forgot all she had come to say, all

that had made her waylay Mr. Van Ingen when kind chance showed him passing her window. "Oh, my!" And with a swift gesture she caught up her purple-plush tea gown, turned cowering from Captain George Wilton, and fled down-stairs.

"It ain't she," she said, breathlessly, to a man who stood below, who had once signed himself "A Friend" to Jane Wilton for sheer joy in her lovely face. "It's just Mrs. Wilton, and if I'd known she was *his* wife I'd never have looked crooked at her. He wouldn't let her play no Mrs. Osbornes."

Mr. Thompson ceased to regret he had let her pass him to go up. He assisted her somewhat grimly to her door. His profession led him to the haunts of the rich and great, of late to the control of Mr. Van Ingen's stables. He stood a moment in the sunshine and took off his hat.

"I'll never see another like her," said he, solemnly, "nor a better finish. She died game, she did," and he retired from the scene. Up-stairs George Wilton stood staring before him, as if he saw no one in the well-filled hall as he reflected aloud.

"Now, who would have thought she would have remembered Charlotte street—and me! Have you any more friends, Jane, for me to polish off?" He was looking through and through Mr. Van Ingen.

"No." She had come forward and was standing at his side. "No, I can attend to the rest for myself." Her hand touched his sleeve as she passed him with a little imperious gesture, and his face flushed warmly. Never until to-day had he felt just that touch in his wife's hand.

Van Ingen stood dumb, black with surprise and rage. For when Miss Wellwood caught him on her doorstep he had come to condole with and ask questions of the bereft and ungodly Sarah.

"How do you do?" said Jane, slowly. "I'm afraid we can't ask you in. I am packing—to take the deceased to America. You know, of course, that Mrs. Osborne is dead."

He bowed. Nothing else occurred to him. He had been victimized, made fun of, and must, to save himself from ridicule, play out the lonely mourner leaving London in the middle of the season.

"And I don't think you have ever met my husband, Captain Wilton."

Mr. Van Ingen, who would be the Background no longer, looked from one to the other, and scored.

"I have to congratulate you both on the convenient career of Mrs. Osborne," he said, and turned away.

It was not a pleasant reply to make, but George Wilton made it, while Jane stood speechless.

"On the contrary," he said, "you may congratulate us on its happy conclusion."

The mystified Adams stared from one to another. There was something in the everyday scene that was not everyday. But the Honorable William Desmond Craven O'Hara clutched his Sarah's hand with cheerful abandon as the door closed forever on the Background.

"Served him right!" said he, calmly. "All the time he was making up to Jane he was living with— with somebody else. And he'll hear it in that quarter if he doesn't hold his tongue about 'careers.'"

"I knew," said Sarah, simply. "I'd have told—if I'd needed to."

And neither man knew if Jane kissed her, or she Jane. Adams had discreetly gone to cook the luncheon.



THE FLAME

O MOTH, that yearns for me,
The whole world pities thee,
Foredoomed on heedless wing
By mad fire-worshipping.

But sadder is my fate,
Who, when the night is late,
See thee in love come nigh,
At my caress to die!

When I would lend thee aid,
To death thou art betrayed;
Yea, I that love thee well,
I am thy heaven and hell!

CHARLES HANSON TOWNE.



HYGIENIC HINTS FOR YOUNG LADIES

IF kissed by the man you love, try homeopathy.
In balloon ascensions, do not fall out with the rest of the party.
Avoid an embrasure in the window.
Avoid taking off your acquaintances in cold weather.

W. W. WHITELOCK.

A SYRIAN NOON

BELOW a grotto consecrate to Pan
 In the old days of melody and mirth,
 When gods at will were said to roam the earth,
 I drowse away the quiet noonday span.
 Never more songfully a river ran,
 Albeit in Xanadu it had its birth,
 Than that anigh me, with its silvery girth,
 Down sparkling toward the shrine-crowned hill of Dan.

The wooer wind breathes lyrics to the leaves;
 A little bird her suitor's vows receives
 Within the poplar boughs that pleach above;
 Ah, 'tis the hour, withdrawn from harrowing cark,
 From your impassioned lips, O sweet, to hark
 Some amorous Arab poet sing of love!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.



THE CRIME THAT FAILED

"WHY, what ails my little pet?" asked Mr. McBride when he returned to his happy home and found his wife weeping.

"Boo-hoo!" wailed Mrs. McBride.

Her husband kissed away a sample of the tears and repeated his request for information. She paused in her weeping long enough to point to an opened letter that lay on the table. Mr. McBride took it up and read:

MISSIS McBRIDE: As kidnapping is all the rage now, I am going into the business. I have decided to begin with the McBride family. This is to tell you that you must deposit \$500 in coin—gold or silver—in the old powder keg in the back part of the vacant lot at the next corner, before midnight to-night. Fail not at your peril, for if the coin is not there when I go to look for it at 12.01 A. M., I will abduct your pug dog. Cough up and save Puggie.

Yours, meaning business,

DICK, THE DARE DEVIL.

"Why, this seems too good to be true," began Mr. McBride. "Puggie to be kidnapped——"

"How dare you break my heart with your cruelty!" demanded Mrs. McBride. "I'll take the dear, sweet, precious Puggie and go right home to mamma with him, and the wicked kidnappers won't know where to find him."

And this she proceeded to do, despite her husband's strenuous objections. Now Mr. McBride is thinking of sending word that if she will return home without the dog no questions will be asked.

WILLIAM HENRY SIVITER.

SONNETS TO A LOVER

By Myrtle Reed

I—THE VINEYARD

UPON the hill beyond the grove of pine
All through the vineyard tiny tendrils run,
Where, marked with fleeting shadow and with sun,
The shimmering leaves and fragrant creepers twine;
September here has made her sparkling wine,
And in the silences of night begun
The fairy spinners mystic lace have spun
Around the clustered purple of the vine.

So through the world's vast vineyard thou and I
Are pledged to walk together side by side
And travel on the way that He has willed.
Though saddest failure in our cups may lie
When we have trod the grapes, He will not chide,
Because with love our wine has been distilled.

II—A LOST APRIL

Is this September? In a golden light
The sudden rain has passed, and sparkling dew
Is dripping from the trees, each drop pierced through
With quivering sun threads, shining silver white.
The thrush's note ascends in rapturous flight,
And every meadow lark that upward flew
From clover fields at dawn is singing, too,
As if there were no Autumn and no night.

Is this September? Nay, for on the earth
In radiant beauty April treads again,
And woos the robins with her smiles and tears.
And so, if dead Spring has another birth,
We have not lost our love's first sweetness then—
It waits somewhere adown the aisle of years.

III—HARVEST

The slanting beams of afternoon have traced,
Where slender shafts of ripening grain unfold,
A mystic pattern wrought of palest gold,
With blood-red poppies closely interlaced.

THE SMART SET

And so the distant harvest fields are graced
With drifted blooms that wander uncontrolled,
And when night's dusky fabrics are unrolled,
In every chalice cup a pearl is placed.

So when my doubtful harvest shall begin,
With such small store of grain as chaff can yield,
And I have naught to give that may atone,
I know the Reaper, seeing far within,
Will grant me pardon for my barren field,
Because thy poppies in my wheat have grown.

IV—INDIAN SUMMER

A purple haze lies on the distant hill
And fallow fields an alien beauty wear;
There seems mysterious promise in the air
Which passing Summer lingers to fulfil.
The silvery music of the tinkling rill
Has died away as if in silent prayer;
The winds have left the murmuring maples bare,
And all the woodland ways are strangely still.

December waits, with winding sheets of snow,
And that fair field, athrill to Autumn's kiss,
A sleeper in an unmarked grave shall be;
They say love has its seasons; even so
The Winter in my heart must be like this,
Because through Summer I have walked with thee.

V—AN OLD GARDEN

Along the wall the lengthening shadows creep
And questing honey bees have homeward flown
O'er meadow grass and weeds now overgrown
Upon the crimson clover lying deep.
Strange sentinels the larkspur's watches keep
And drowsily the thistledown is blown;
White morning-glories vagrant blooms have sown
Where that forgotten garden lies asleep.

Far down the path, beside the broken gate,
In seeming portent stands a cypress tree;
And royal, lonely, like a thing apart,
A single golden rose has challenged Fate.
Thus at the last may it be given me
To sleep with thy dead roses on my heart.

VI—LAVENDER

The memory of old gardens gently clings
Around these broken flowers, now gray and dead,
While childish dreams and visions, long since fled,
Come back once more on swift and kindly wings.

Again the meadow lark at sunrise sings,
And fairy webs all through the woodland spread,
With drops of crystal strung on every thread,
Bring back the sweetness of forgotten Springs.

The lavender is dead—yet 'tis not death,
For stores of snowy linen, finely spun,
Shall hold its subtle fragrance through the year.
And so, as linen scented by its breath,
In all my life must be a little sun
Because I know that thou hast loved me, dear!

VII—A VIOLIN

Dark night and storm and passioned breakers' din,
The sea-bird's note, the vastness of the tide
And softest winds that through the forest sighed
Are with this fibre strangely woven in.
The organ tones of surge and sea begin
Within this mystic temple, sanctified
By all the vanished years that, ere they died,
Had hid their sweetness in a violin.

Some day the buried music shall be found
When master hands awake the sleeping voice
To some great song that in crescendo rings;
And thus, as silence changed to rapturous sound,
My wakened heart must ever more rejoice
Because thy fingers touched the hidden strings.

VIII—FORGIVENESS

Dear, why shouldst thou for my forgiveness plead
And take the blame in knightly lover's way,
When thou must know I could not tell thee nay,
Since my unfailing pardon is thy need?
Of my mistakes thou hast not taken heed,
But yet I fear thy clearer vision may
Discern behind thy dream my faulty clay—
Then of thy grace shall I have greater need.

Forgive thee, dearest? It were passing strange
To grant thee pardon for a single fault
When all of mine must balance with thy one;
I have thy love, beyond the reach of change,
Which all my erring future must exalt—
And I forgive thee all thou hast not done.

IX—CROWNED

I hear no coronation hymns ascend
Where loyal peoples marble arches raise;
Within no palace halls I pass my days,
Before my throne no lords and ladies bend.

No trumpet-tongued salutes my paths attend
 Nor cries of silver bugles sound my praise;
 For me no fires of splendid triumph blaze—
 I have no mighty kingdom to defend.

Yet I am royal, for thy lips have said:
 "My queen, I love thee even more than life,
 And my believing heart to thee I bring."
 So shalt thou place a crown upon my head
 And bring me purple with the name of wife,
 Because thou art my lover and my king.

X—NIGHT

Adown the lane come flocks of weary sheep
 With muffled tinklings to the waiting fold;
 Dim grayness lies upon the sun's last gold,
 And timid stars into the shadow creep.
 A gracious darkness on the rocky steep
 Has fallen where the drowsy sheep-bells tolled,
 And far afield the drooping poppies hold
 Within their dusky petals softest sleep.

Twilight and hush, and then the mystic hours
 When Dian moves along her starry ways,
 From day-long bondage of the sun set free;
 My soul has opened as night-blooming flowers
 That fear the heat and splendor of the days—
 Ah, Love, 'tis night, and I am waiting thee!

XI—STAR-BREAK

As if by magic sunset gates unbar
 And through the portals Day goes home to rest;
 The crimson clouds, massed in the golden west,
 Foundations of celestial cities are.
 The flaming beacons shed their light afar
 Till twilight comes upon the mountain crest;
 Gray shadows deepen on Night's quiet breast,
 That bears the jewel of a single star.

Then out upon the meadows, strangely white,
 Where like a ghostly veil lies Autumn mist,
 The thousand lights of heaven softly shine.
 Like this thy love has risen on my night,
 Thy arms around me keep a lover's tryst—
 Star-break and thee, and thy lips close on mine!



THE SPLENDOR OF DEAD DAYS

By Marvin Dana

THE lover of luxury must reflect with sadness on the fact that the site of Sybaris is now only a malodorous marsh. That city, once the home of all material enjoyments, where pleasure was practiced as the chief science, and from whose name our language derives its most forceful words expressive of luxurious leisure, is lost to sight forever in malarious mists, and its only monody is the shrilling of waterfowl. Yet this city, of all places in the world in any age, was supremely the City of Sumptuous Delights—delights compared to which our artificial enjoyments of to-day are crude and vulgar.

In our age civilization is noisy. Our great centres—London, Paris, New York—are pandemoniums. The Sybarites forbade any employment of a noisy sort within the city limits, lest the slumbrous ease of the citizens be disturbed. As by this law of quiet, so by the cultivation of many other vital principles of the art of enjoyment the ancients demonstrated themselves our superiors in æstheticism. To-day we are utilitarian; our very extravagance smacks of the useful. We rarely revel in ornate magnificence that does not cover convenience. The voluptuaries of old indulged their whims, however wild. They had no fear of press criticism, no guide save imperious fancy.

Beneath the placid surface of Diana's Mirror—the Lake Nemi, near Genzano, in Italy—the remains of a Roman state galley have lain for centuries. One Roman museum possesses a ponderous beam, ornamented with bronze, which was taken from the bottom of the lake four hundred

years ago. Rather recently the remnants of the vessel were located on the lake's bottom, buried nearly a hundred feet deep in the mud, and divers brought up many fragments, such as decorative lions and wolves of bronze. Enough has been discovered to show that an imperial palace once floated on Nemi's beautiful waters. The huge craft supported a gorgeous royal residence, surrounded by a dainty park thick with trees and odorous with blossoms. Statues gleamed along the paths, and lining the boat's sides massive stone parapets that served as bulwarks were adorned with sculptured columns and brazen beasts, while the palace itself was richly ornamented with elaborate carvings. To this retreat, so magnificent yet so tranquil as it floated on gentle waves, the Emperor Trajan retired from the cares of state.

The Roman ruler was not unique in his conception of such a palace, for Athenæus describes the splendors of similar vessels owned by Heron II. of Syracuse and by Ptolemy IV. One looks in vain among the house-boats on the Thames for beauties such as these displayed. Even the most ornate of modern yachts are not comparable for luxury of furnishing.

Such aquatic craft were not designed for voyaging. The ancients were, however, often most munificent in the adorning of boats intended for traveling purposes. On that romantic journey when Cleopatra sailed for Tarsus to attend Antony's court, the wayward beauty occupied a vessel of superb magnificence. The sails were of purple silk, thick-woven; music timed the rowers' strokes; the

oars were of silver; the stern was overlaid with gold; stars of gold spangled the couch on which Egypt's Queen reclined in the guise of Venus, surrounded by Cupids and Nereids, while the smoke of burning incense perfumed all the Cydnus's shore.

Perhaps the nearest approach in later times to the luxuries of Cleopatra's vessel was in that gorgeous Bucentaur, built in the twelfth century for the espousals of Venice and the Adriatic. This was a hundred feet in length, manned by one hundred and sixty-eight rowers and forty sailors, and throughout it was gilded and ornamented with exquisitely carved medallions, marine deities and allegorical groups. The galley remained intact as to form until 1797, but we may believe that hardly a fragment of the original structure remained until that time, as repairs had been constant during six centuries.

In profane ancient history no name is more familiar than that of Cræsus. With our large belief in living dogs to the disparagement of all dead lions, some of us may be inclined to suspect that Cræsus would have made rather an insignificant figure beside certain modern multi-millionaires. But the historian Herodotus corrects the impression in recounting merely that part of the Lydian king's treasures devoted to religious offerings. "In the temple's treasury was a votive gift from Cræsus consisting of one hundred and seventeen ingots of gold, each six palms long, three palms broad and one palm thick." Among the monarch's offerings in other Grecian temples the same historian saw the life-size figure of a lion, a wine bowl of great weight, a lustral vase, and the statue of a woman three cubits high, all of solid gold. Indeed, a conservative calculation of Cræsus's wealth, based on such data as we possess, makes it stupendously beyond any individual fortune of to-day.

It is not a far cry from Cræsus and his gold to the last golden monument of Alexander. That final ex-

hibition of the conqueror's riches was his coffin. Alexander was ever egotistically luxurious in his tastes. He permitted none other than Pyrgoteles to engrave his head, none other than Apelles to paint his portrait, none other than Lysippus to cast his image in bronze. So when he came to die his body was placed in a ponderous casket of virgin gold that he himself had designed.

This pomp of death affords some curious glimpses into a phase of ancient luxury. Thus Sarakos, last of the Ninevite kings, was altogether dissolute and effeminate, yet his demise was luxuriously tragic. When he found himself about to be overcome by the revolting Medes and Babylonians he built a huge funeral pyre in his palace court, constructed of the costliest perfumed woods and surrounded by enormous heaps of treasure. On the top of this pyre a sumptuous pavilion was erected, and there Sarakos and his wives and concubines assembled. The torch was applied, and as the blaze began to creep upward, as the fragrant smoke eddied about the King and his womankind, golden goblets were filled with wine, that added its madness to the revel of death. The doomed roysterers laughed and sang until they sank down in stupor. So they cheated the fire of its torture, and the enemy at last found of Sarakos and his treasure only a mound of ashes.

Another monarch who made luxurious provisions for self-murder was Heliogabalus, that notorious Roman monster of the third century. When he found himself threatened with assassination as the result of his cruel lunacies he built an elaborate tower, from the top of which he might cast himself to destruction. The ascent was by a flight of steps, all of gold, inlaid with mother-of-pearl. In addition, he provided himself with various rich apparatus for suicide. That he might strangle himself at a moment's notice, he carried always on his person cords of purple silk twisted with strands of gold. He gathered,

too, an armory of golden swords and daggers, profusely jeweled. He had, as well, a store of deadly poisons, each in an exquisite box cut from a single gem. Yet, despite all his finical paraphernalia, he was at last caught like a rat in a trap, hiding in a dark corner of his palace; he was run through by a vulgar sword, trampled on by the dirtiest of soldiers' sandals, and his defiled carcass thrown into the Tiber's muddy tide.

Heliogabalus was throughout his reign a conspicuous example of the luxurious lunatic. One of his extravagances was an absurd attention to fashions in dress. He created a senate of women, who sat in solemn conclave as a state legislative body to determine styles in costumes. He himself affected only garments of purple silk and gold, and never wore a robe twice. This was an extravagance greater than appears at first thought. The Romans in that age did not know where silk was made, or how, but they so prized the little that fell into their hands that for it they paid enormous sums in gold. It was so scarce that the thicker silks were unwoven and manufactured into lighter grades to increase the extent of the fabric. Heliogabalus's suppers usually cost him sixty thousand dollars or more. He fed his favorite horse on gilded oats, and the beast was appointed consul. All the Emperor's apartments blazed with gold and precious stones. He trod on rugs made of hares' down; his mats were woven from the soft feathers found under partridges' wings. His carpets were a mesh of gold and silver. His shoes were solidly encrusted with precious stones.

The state of Heliogabalus's horse was unparalleled, but the ancients often lavished absurd luxuries on their most cherished steeds. The regal magnificence of Alexander's provision for Bucephalus is familiar to every reader of history. Caligula demanded divine reverence for his charger, Incitatus, and that pampered animal dined often with his master, drinking wine from golden goblets.

Only the death of the Emperor prevented the horse from becoming consul. But perhaps the most absurd instance of extravagance in steeds occurred in the life of Sesostris. This Rameses, Egypt's greatest ruler, once set out to conquer the world with half a million foot soldiers, twenty-four thousand horsemen and twenty-seven thousand armed chariots. On his return from the campaign he proceeded to the temple to give thanks for his victories. He rode in a chariot that was drawn by captive kings harnessed as horses four abreast, their royal robes trailing in the dust as they toiled to drag the car of their complacent captor.

One of Sesostris's predecessors was Nitocris, who became Queen of Egypt in 1678 B. C. Her indulgence took the form of vengeance. Some of her subjects murdered her brother, and she determined to punish the assassins. To this end she built a subterranean palace, in which a huge banquet hall was the chief feature. This room was splendidly adorned. Thither the criminals were invited to a feast. They went gladly, unsuspectingly. The tables were loaded with delicate edibles and costly wines. Soon the revel grew mighty, for the Queen withdrew early. Of a sudden the ceiling fell with a crash, and a roaring torrent overwhelmed the victims of Nitocris's hate.

This elaborate scheme against conspirators recalls an Ethiopian custom that must have been a superlative luxury to reigning monarchs since it insured peace at home. In Ethiopia was a mountain, by name Geshen, all of rock, very lofty and uncompromisingly steep, with precipices on every side. The only way of ascent or descent was by means of rope pulleys. On the comb of this eyrie were clustered a few wretched huts. On such a forbidding summit the princes of the blood royal were imprisoned—all of them—while the sovereign reigned undisturbed by the plots of envious kinsfolk. Whenever a king died a prince was brought down from the

stony perch and forthwith assumed regal sway, while his fellow prisoners continued in their wretched state. The history of nations affords various arguments in favor of this early Ethiopian system.

From time to time in recent years there have been hints that wealth might attain to royal dignities through the agency of a sufficient marriage portion. Such a transaction would hardly equal that of Didius Julianus. After the death of Pertinax in 193 A. D., the Prætorian guards offered the Roman Empire for sale. One of the Senators, Didius, a man of unlimited wealth, bought it for the absurd sum of ten million dollars. The money was divided among the soldiers, and Didius was forthwith proclaimed Emperor, with the sanction of the truckling senate. The new monarch instantly began a career replete with every vagary his dissolute fancy could suggest. For three months he reveled in his purchased royalty. Then Severus came to Rome as a conqueror, and Didius lost his empire and his head at one stroke.

It was rather a common luxury among the ancient monarchs to claim divine honors, and while yet in the flesh to receive worship as gods. This was frequent in Rome, and emperors often took delight in expending a portion of their uncounted treasures in the making of their own images to be shrined for adoration in the temples. Diocletian, at the opening of the fourth century, was one who ordered his subjects to prostrate themselves before him as before a deity. It is amusing to compare with the pomp of his court, where he paraded as a god, his final condition. Having voluntarily abdicated, he retired to Salona, whence he wrote to his colleague Maximian:

"I wish you would come to Salona and see the cabbages I have planted. You would never again mention to me the name of empire."

A droll detail in this affectation of godship was introduced by Commodus, the athletic and dissolute son of Marcus Aurelius. When the senate

confirmed his claim to divinity, he promptly added a halo to his costume. He had his hair thickly powdered with gold dust, and the result was a gratifying and convincing aureole.

Another and somewhat Mosaic variation is comparatively modern. The last of the Saracenic caliphs who ruled at Bagdad was Mostasem, slain by the Tartars in 1258. He candidly considered his subjects unworthy to behold the glories of his face. Therefore whenever he appeared in public he shrouded the splendor of his features beneath a veil of golden tissue.

Oftentimes ancient extravagances were distinctly whimsical, although usually ingenious, occasionally impressive. Priestcraft, especially, originated many devices of a mechanical sort, whereby the order of nature seemed to be reversed. The vast wealth that filled the treasuries of the temples was to a large extent used in the fabrication of apparatus designed to awe observers with the idea of miraculous agencies. The floors of temples undulated, so that worshippers walked as on waves of the sea. Doorways widened or narrowed at a visitor's approach, according as his size was large or small. Tripods walked forward to receive the offerings. Statues bled, nodded, moved their arms and wept.

Similar devices came into secular use, so that the palaces of the wealthy were filled with intricate automata far beyond any modern devices, for often mechanical contrivances fulfilled all the functions of a staff of servants. One may find fascination in imagining a banquet where profuse luxuries of food and plate were emphasized by mysterious apparatus producing the effects of enchantment. Indeed, all that the most sybaritic fancy could suggest and enormous wealth purchase went to the perfecting of those ancient feasts. Hardly a feature of the chief entertainments but was superior in extravagance to the modest functions of our age. The couches on which the guests reclined were often of value sufficient to pay

for a cycle of smart dinners in our day. At the feast made by Ahasuerus for his nobles, the couches on which the guests reclined were of gold and silver, and the supper rooms of the Roman emperors were tapestried with these metals and emblazoned with jewels. Some of the emperors had dining tables of pure gold. In the houses of the patricians the floors of the banqueting halls were beautiful with rare mosaics, the ceilings were a fretwork of gold and ivory, the lamps were of intricate bronze and held scented oil in which the wick floated with a mellow light, diffusing grateful odors. In the more degenerate days of the empire the delicacies of the table were incomparably more expensive and esoteric than anything in our age. The livers and brains of the most minute birds were provided in quantities; the heads of parrots and pheasants, the tongues of peacocks and nightingales, and the like, were more common than truffles and ortolans to-day. At a dinner given by Lucius to his brother, the Emperor Vitellius, there were served two thousand dishes of fish and seven thousand of fowl. One of the concotions, named "the shield of Minerva," was an olio of the sounds of the fish *scarrus*, the brains of woodcocks, the tongues of divers rare birds, and the spawn of lampreys from the Caspian Sea. In this connection it is notable that Vitellius, among others, acquired the art of disgorging himself, so that he might continue his gluttony with good appetite, no matter how long he continued eating.

In those days eating was distinctly a fine art, beyond the wildest dreams of modern gourmets. It is an historic fact that on one occasion the Roman senate was assembled for the express purpose of consulting as to the best manner of dressing a huge turbot that had been presented to the Emperor.

Naturally, the magnificence that marked the feasts of the wealthy was displayed throughout their establishments. Pliny the younger has left us a description of one of the four

country villas he owned, and from it we catch a glimpse of the refinement of the period. To quote from a paragraph describing a nook in the park: "At the end of one of the walks was an alcove of white marble, shaded with vines and supported by four pillars. A fountain here emptied itself into a marble basin contrived with so much art as to be always full without overflowing. Sometimes the owner supped here with his friends, and then the basin served as a table, the larger vessels being placed about the margin and the smaller ones swimming here and there in the form of little boats and waterfowl. In front of the alcove stood a Summer-house of exquisite marble, with projecting doors that opened into a green enclosure. Next to this was a private recess, furnished with a couch and shaded by a spreading vine. Here also a fountain alternately rose and disappeared. Along the walks were marble seats, and throughout the whole were small rills that refreshed the grass and plants."

Such is a detail in the ordinary luxury of that age, a luxury in this case of daintiest good taste. Otherwise, it may be, is an instance of magnificence afforded by that gorgeous golden house that Nero built within Rome's limits. In the enclosure were artificial lakes, forests, parks, vineyards, orchards and gardens. At the lofty portal of the palace stood a colossal statue of the tyrant. This was one hundred and twenty feet in height, and from it we may gain some idea concerning the huge proportions of a mansion the doorway of which was sufficiently large to contain such adornment. A number of galleries, supported by triple rows of towering pillars, were each a mile in length. The roof of this marvelous structure was covered with tiles of gold, and the same metal was overlaid on the walls, which were further enriched by mother-of-pearl and precious stones. In one banqueting hall the ceiling represented the firmament, wherein the stars revolved continuously day

and night, showering perfumes on the guests.

Rome, in the heyday of its power, was indeed surpassingly luxurious in all its life. Not alone the privileged few, but the mass of citizens indulged in sumptuous ease and display. The public baths, vast and magnificent, were surrounded by spacious gardens, where all were free to wander. Within were vast halls for bathing and swimming, and huge apartments for all other athletic exercises. In addition there were rooms for the declaiming poets and lecturing philosophers. The whole was made beautiful with paintings, sculptures and every art of architecture. The grandeur of the baths erected by Diocletian may be apprehended from the fact that one single remaining hall now forms the Church of the Carthusians, which is one of the largest and most splendid in modern Rome.

Another impressive example of luxury in public institutions is found in the decorated aqueducts. One built by Agrippa was ornamented with five hundred fountains, each made beautiful by statues and columns. We must remember, too, that display was not the sole worth of Rome's work; some of these aqueducts have continued as channels of water for nearly two thousand years.

But the consummate beauty of Rome in its glory is an inexhaustible theme. It was a place of indescribable loveliness. Nothing of to-day approaches it. Of old, however, there were many cities that rejoiced in similar private and public splendors. But one of the many distinctions of Alexandria, built nearly three centuries before the Christian era, was a great street that ran the entire length of the city, beginning at the Gate of the Sea and ending at the Gate of Canopus, and this avenue was two thousand feet in width. Another of equal width intersected it, and the square formed by the crossing of the two was nearly two miles in extent. Standing in the centre of this huge square one could see both gates

and watch the vessels arriving from the north and from the south. The structures along these two avenues were palaces, temples, public buildings and obelisks showing the richest hues in marble and porphyry. Without exception these streets were the noblest the world has ever seen. The most renowned of our time are insignificant by comparison.

Greece, too, in its prime had possessions more splendid than we can boast. The Parthenon, in which was shrined the masterpiece of all sculpture, Phidias's Minerva, remains after twenty centuries to tell us of the beauty and merit of Grecian architecture. The Acropolis of Athens, in which was the Parthenon, was six miles in circumference, and its whole area was adorned with the sublimest works of architecture, lavishly embellished with sculpture and painting. Besides Athens, there were also Elis, Delphi, Corinth, Eleusis, Argos and other cities, all rich in artistic treasures. Thus in the beautiful temple of Olympian Jupiter at Elis was Phidias's statue of the god. This was sixty feet in height, all of gold and ivory. It showed the deity seated on a throne of ebony and ivory inlaid with precious stones and adorned with carvings and paintings. The figure's robes were covered with flowers and animals wrought in solid gold.

Though less famed, the splendors of ancient Persia were hardly inferior. The description of one palace in Persepolis has come down to us and tells of a gorgeousness perhaps unsurpassed, certainly immeasurably beyond aught in the noblest modern residence. For example, in this superb structure the whole was finished in a mosaic of amber, ivory and gold.

Even more ancient is the renown of Tadmor in the desert, the Palmyra of the Romans, founded by Solomon, rebuilt by Trajan, called by Abulfeda the Arabian, "the white but leafless rose of the sandy wilderness." The melancholy ruins of Tadmor are indescribably impres-

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sive, witnessing a departed grandeur unequaled since desolation settled on its stones. Within a circuit of fifteen miles are now standing three thousand columns, erect after the lapse of cycles, each one of shining white marble. There are groups of them, rows of them, while thick about lie the hosts of their fallen fellows. From the heaped rubble project fragments of cornices, of pedestals, of capitals, of various sculptured decorations, works of wondrous beauty. These wrecks mutely witness to us that the city of columns was once the fairest of earth's cities.

Luxury and splendor are, in truth, no whit less as we penetrate farther into time's remote recesses. No whim ever found a more sumptuous or grander expression than did that of Amytis, the wife of Nebuchadnezzar and daughter of Astyages, King of Media. When the Queen, looking out from her palace in Babylon on the broad plains that surrounded the city, mourned for her native woods and mountains, and wished that they might be brought to her, her husband straightway built the famed hanging gardens for his consort's benefit. These were four hundred feet on every side and three hundred and fifty feet in height, overtopping the city's walls. They rose in terraced slopes, and in the deep soil were planted trees and flowers, making the aerial park a charming sylvan landscape. A large lake on the top contained water driven up from the Euphrates by engines. The enormous weight was sustained by an admirable system of arches on arches, within which were spacious chambers.

Other structures in Babylon were not less remarkable. In the middle of the temple of Belus stood an immense tower six hundred feet in height and six hundred feet square at its base. It was made up of eight smaller towers placed one above another, and diminishing in size toward the top. On the summit was a gold image forty feet in height, of a value estimated at \$17,000,000. This and

the other treasures said to have been contained in this single temple are conservatively reckoned to have been worth about \$210,000,000. Whether or not we believe this, we know that thousands of years before our era Babylon was a city wherein every industry flourished, and wherein the luxuries surpassed the maddest dreams of any modern voluptuary. In this connection it is well to remember that the area of Babylon was eight times that of London and all London's appendages. It is impossible to be truly sybaritic and be cramped for room at the same time.

The known intelligence and power of the Egyptians prepare us to believe in the luxuriousness of their state. The evidences of supreme splendor survive in the most imposing among the world's ruins. Thus the temple at Karnac—to give but one example—has been generally admitted to be unrivaled both in the beauty of its details and in its immensity. The site of the temple is about a mile in extent. The enormous building had twelve principal entrances, each formed of several *propylæa* and gigantic gateways, with secondary structures, themselves larger than most other temples. Many of the *propylæa* still retain their flanking statues of granite and basalt, thirty feet in height. They were approached by avenues bounded on each side by rows of colossal sphinxes, each cut from a single block of syenite. One of these passages may even now be traced for nearly two miles, and its course is marked by six hundred great images of the mythical creature. Between the main structure and the *propylæa* is a great court four hundred and fifty feet in length, divided by a double row of pillars more than fifty feet in height and flanked by thirty columns on each side. The portico of the temple proper has one hundred and thirty-four columns sustaining the roof, and these are from twenty-six to thirty-four feet in circumference. The entrance to the sanctuary is guarded by four beautiful obelisks. In the *ady-*

turn the chief rooms are of granite. In one the ceiling is painted blue, ornamented with gilded stars, and the walls are covered with colored sculptures. An idea of the temple's great size may be gained from the fact that the distance between the eastern door and the western is two thousand feet.

But the massive glories of Egypt's past may not be rehearsed here. Enough that it has been said of the Egyptians that they understood better than any other nation how to use sculpture in combination with architecture; that they understood how to make their colossi and avenues of sphinxes group themselves into parts of one great design, the whole being the highest class of phonetic utterance, and surpassing anything the world has seen during the thirty centuries of struggle and aspiration that have elapsed since the brilliant days of the great kingdom of the Pharaohs.

The same autocracy that commanded the building of structures so stupendous could and did command for itself every device of pomp and luxury. The rulers fared sumptuously beyond any possibility of modern royal imitation. The imposing monuments of their deaths, the pyramids, are, too, indicative of the superlative splendor in their lives.

And that which we know of Egypt's gorgeousness we may dare surmise concerning another nation, the nation that in unrecorded ages flourished in India. Among the many amazing relics this people left for our awed contemplation, none is more startling than the temple at Ellora, where an entire mountain of solid rock was converted by infinite toil into a sculptured palace, a work unique in the world, certainly the quaintest, perhaps the most dignified of human monuments.

Truly there were giants in those days, giants for pleasure, for vice, for good, for evil. They were giants who, nevertheless, possessed a certain quality of childishness, that juvenile positivism that clamored imperatively

for whatsoever it desired. Thus the despot of old time no sooner conceived a wish than he straightway set millions toiling for its accomplishment. Those folk of the ancient world, however civilized, retained a strain of savagery, a barbaric fixity of purpose that made each object desired a thing of supreme moment, a thing to be achieved at all costs. They were impulsive always, usually illogical, and therefore strenuous in the pursuit of purpose. Hence they could accomplish miracles.

To-day we are too civilized for this. We are animated by a pervasive utilitarianism. We demand in advance the exact purport of any toil; and if our reason rejects it, we refuse to undertake the task. Our failure to rival the greater luxuries of the past finds its explanation here. It is not that we lack the individual power. To-day we have golden princes mighty as any Pharaoh, despots of dollars. They could accomplish the wildest fantasies of splendor were it not that they are restrained by a conventional morality insisting on a utilitarian cause for any great undertaking.

But in every luxury having utility as its excuse, we leave far behind any preceding period of the world. What were once the rare luxuries of the noblest are become the commonplace conveniences of the many; and, too, the ordinary homes of this age possess serviceable luxuries beyond the bravest dreams of antiquity. The homes of civilization are filled with such luxuries; the most admirable devices for comfort are given to the whole public. Where once the best brains toiled to invent some new thing that the sumptuous state of a tyrant might be yet more pampered, the world's genius of this later time strives ever to create additional mechanisms, the advantages and conveniences of which every householder may enjoy. We insist, first, on usefulness. This secured, adornment is added by the individual as suits his purse and his pleasure. And the last state of man is better than the first.

THE HOUSEHOLD GODS

By Richard Le Gallienne

MRS. VEDA HAMILTON sat on the balcony of her beautiful country house on the Hudson and watched the sunset. She was alone to-night, and glad to be alone. Her husband was away in Washington on political business—Joseph Hamilton, one of the strongest men and noblest natures in American politics. Dinner was over, and her two children, a boy of seventeen and a girl of fifteen, had eagerly begged to be excused that they might watch the carpenters erecting the stage in the great hall for their amateur theatricals next week.

The sound of hammers and young voices came to Mrs. Hamilton as she sat and watched the mellow purples and golds of the sumptuously dying day. Every stroke of the hammer and every happy young laugh smote her heart like the tolling of a bell.

That performance her children were so passionately anticipating—would she be there to see it? Would it, indeed, ever take place?

Mrs. Hamilton was a woman about forty, strikingly brunette. Her thick black hair, her rich olive skin and her majestic black eyes—"tropics and tragedy in solution," a wit had said—seemed magnificently out of place, somehow, even in their luxurious surroundings. There was an untamed, unsatisfied romance about her. And yet she was a very happy woman. She had married the man of her choice—a man who was as good and charming a husband as he was a distinguished politician—and he was a true companion. All she had asked of life had been given her. Her home was a paradise of harmo-

nies and satisfactions. Her children were clever and beautiful. She did all she pleased. Not a desire was unfulfilled, not an inclination unsatisfied. Mrs. Veda Hamilton was a happy married woman of the highest order.

In some such terms as these she would herself have described her life—at all events a year ago; but a year ago this very night it had been revealed to her that, after all, something was lacking in her ordered, happy existence that had hitherto seemed so complete and satisfying.

Mogens Neergaard, the great Scandinavian violinist, brought her the news.

They had met at a musical in New York, and as soon as they had spoken to each other she knew what that something was, knew, with a heart that shuddered at the discovery—and yet strangely sang—that her life could never seem complete—never even real—again.

Her life had contained every element but one—that element of wonder, of enchanted exaltation, which we call romance. It had been everything but a fairy tale. Yet not till Mogens Neergaard had come and touched her with his magic bow had she been conscious of the lack.

It was less the famous music than the man himself. The music was but a part of him, like his deep, laughing voice or his sea-king's eyes; for Mogens Neergaard was not one of those hunchbacks of art whose divine faculty must house with deformity. He was more like those old troubadours who could fight as brilliantly as they could sing.

Yea! one who wore his love like sword
on thigh
And kept not all his valor for his lute.

His tall, athletic figure and his fine, erect head gave assurance of a man who was as strong as he was fearless. A rapid, irresistible lover, he was no effeminate or cowardly amorist, and his physical courage had been attested by several famous duels.

When he and Veda Hamilton had met in that New York drawing-room, their introduction was for each other a thrilling recognition—a divine meeting again, rather than a first acquaintance. One of those mysterious understandings that instantly unite men and women who are destined to play a part in each other's history, immediately sprang up between them. It seemed strange that their hostess should be taking the trouble to introduce them. They knew each other so well.

A month later Veda Hamilton and Neergaard were sitting on the very balcony where she was now sitting, for Neergaard had come almost to make his home there for awhile, and no one but himself knew that, at great expense, he had canceled important engagements to stay there. For an artist Neergaard was a rich man; so he could afford to love like a millionaire.

"Fancy Mrs. Pottle thinking it necessary to introduce us!" laughed Neergaard, suddenly, after a slight pause in which they had sat watching the sunset on Veda Hamilton's veranda. "I remember so perfectly what you wore that day ten thousand years ago, . . . or was it earlier? I think it was. Indeed, I cannot remember a time when we didn't know each other. Can you?"

"I cannot," answered Mrs. Hamilton, gaily. "I remember perfectly what you played—that is, if you really remember what I wore."

"Is it a challenge?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'll tell you some day."

"You're a brave man."

"Yes, I know—but why?"

"To think you could describe a woman's dress—particularly one so much out of fashion."

"Men *make* women's dresses. Men are the great artists in women's dresses, as they are in every other form of art. It is their fancy and skill that make—some—women what they are."

"They may make our dresses—some men, but no true man can describe a woman's dress. I stick to my point."

"There is a kind of man who can," said Neergaard, audaciously smiling an unspoken word.

"He least of all."

"You mean—?"

"I mean, to save you the anguish of committing an indiscretion, that love is particularly blind in this matter."

"You said the word first, remember," laughed Neergaard.

"What word?"

"Love."

"I said it to prevent your saying it."

"I will never say it."

"You must never say it."

"No; but some day I will come in a chariot of fire and carry you away where no eyes but mine shall see you, where I shall be jealous only of the sun and the stars—not forgetting the moon," added Neergaard, with one of those aside laughs that made no woman ever quite sure of him.

"I am not a Sabine, remember, but an American—an American matron."

"Well, in an automobile, then."

"I think I should prefer a naphtha launch."

"You would? All right. A naphtha launch—with a chariot of fire waiting—where shall I say?"

"Where do you think?"

"Anywhere this side of heaven."

"A nice, indefinite rendezvous. You artists are so impractical."

"That is a common mistake about us, which, on the whole, we prefer to encourage. And am I nothing more to you than an artist? Please think of me as a man."

"Much more."

"More than a man?"

"Yes."

"Do you mean a god?" asked Neergaard, returning to his irony.

"No—Mogens Neergaard."

"Is that your answer?"

"Did you miss it?"

"I didn't. How could I? . . . Truly I remember the dress you wore ten thousand years ago," said Neergaard, presently.

"Tell me."

And Neergaard described it.

"And I remember the piece you played."

"Tell me."

"Play it again."

And Neergaard played it.

In that hour there began a communion between Veda Hamilton and Mogens Neergaard for which, in the world's coarse dictionary, there is no name. Was it love? Was Neergaard Mrs. Hamilton's "lover?" Surely not, as the world understands those words. Veda Hamilton remained no less true a wife and mother for her friendship with Neergaard. And Neergaard, without a suspicion of treachery, had still the right to take the hand of Joseph Hamilton and look frankly into his eyes. Nothing that had ever been Joseph Hamilton's, or could ever be his forever, had been violated, or even jeopardized. It was only the quality in his wife which had never been and could never be his, that had been given to Neergaard. It was no vulgar thief of the heart's treasure who had come to mean so much to his wife, and was his own dearest friend. Indeed, something had been given to him rather than taken away by the companionship of the two; for through it a whole unsunned garden in his wife's nature broke into blossom.

She had been like a palace the most wonderful rooms of which none till now had cared to inhabit. Surely there was no wrong in Neergaard dwelling in those disused chambers of imagery. Till he came to the palace no one else had knocked at those unsuspected doors. And how wonder-

ful it was to have someone living in those forgotten rooms!

No doubt the world, which occasionally caught glimpses of Mrs. Hamilton and Neergaard together, had its own crude interpretations. The world knows only one way of loving. But, indeed, Mogens Neergaard and Veda Hamilton dwelt in "breathless bowers"—it "dreamed not of," and it is worth pondering how so good and beautiful a thing as their friendship was and can be so hopelessly misconstrued by a vulgar, concupiscent world—a world whose standards of love are the standards of the divorce court. Neergaard, it must be said, in explanation of such gossip, was somewhat famous for his affairs of love and honor. Mrs. Hamilton might well, maybe, figure as one more moth drawn by his fatal dazzle; but how positively laughable the mistake was! The two people most concerned enjoyed together the few echoes of such talk that reached them.

"Has he kissed you yet?" asked an old woman friend of Mrs. Hamilton, worldly to her finger-tips. She was a woman not easily frightened, but the blazing silence of Mrs. Hamilton's reply perceptibly shortened her call.

"The fools! the idiots! the pigs!" Neergaard stormed, when he heard the story. "Kiss you! Heavens! Who wants to *kiss* you?"

Both of them broke into laughter at his vehemence. Certainly it was not the customary talk of a lover.

"Kiss you!" he went on fuming to himself. "What a word! Kiss you!" And then he burst forth into one of his torrents of breathless rage. "Why, Veda, when I want to kiss you, do you think I'll do it behind the door? No! I'll just take you and set you high up on yonder star, and kiss you in front of all the universe. Oh, these little sneak thieves of love! This petty larceny of the Seventh Commandment! Tell me, Veda—" and he stopped short in his fierce walk to and fro, and took her sternly by the wrists—"tell me, Veda, in all our hours together, have I ever

seemed for a moment to be thinking, to have it in me to be thinking, of their miserable little love—their kisses, their caresses, their sickly little sugar plums? Ugh! The fools, the idiots, the pigs, the schoolgirls! Oh, but I'll kiss you some day," he turned off, with savage inconsequence, "and the whole world will know of it, but they won't call it 'kissing.' It will be thunder and lightning and tempest and rainbows—and the fools will look up in terror, and say, 'It thunders,' or 'It lightens,' knowing nothing of what the gods are really doing. Kiss you! Do you see the tip of the young moon over there?"—his mood returning once more to fancy and laughter. "Well, some day you and I will sit and dangle our heels up there, just at the very end, and laugh at the whole stupid world, and kiss—yes! kiss, if we care about it—just as often as we please."

"Little child," said Veda Hamilton, soothingly, stroking his fine, strong hands. "What a child a great big man really is, after all! What a child!"

The stars were coming out overhead, fields upon fields of marguerites.

Neergaard turned gently to his friend, his wild mood subsiding.

"Little mother," he said, tenderly.

How good, indeed, Mogens Neergaard and Veda Hamilton had been and were for each other, one could hardly expect a wicked world to understand.

Most people not entirely animal, vegetable or mineral, whatever the comfort or security of their lives, are haunted by an ideal—one might almost call it an ideal of excitement—that no worldly prosperity can appease and no respectable occupation lull. There is some music of joy that life has never yet struck out of them. That flowering of existence we call romance has never come to them. Their lives have been brick-and-mortar. They have missed the moonshine. Those magic casements of which Keats tells have never

opened for them. Nothing they have ever done has had the delight for them of something they ought not to do. They have the peace and the pence, but the music went down the other street. Such are not always consciously disappointed. Sometimes there is needed someone to come and remind them of what they really care for, and what—if they are not quick—they will surely miss.

Veda Hamilton's was such a nature. She was like a musical instrument unconscious of itself. She was ignorant of her own music till Mogens Neergaard came and with the mere sound of his voice set all the keys a-trembling. Perhaps he had discovered nothing in her except her unused capacities for being happy. How happy he made her! and by what simple means! She had only to see him. He had only to come and sit by her and say that he had managed to catch the 5.30 train. He had only to ask her husband what his opinion was as to the chances of a certain measure. He had only to say: "It is rather warm to-night; may I open this window?" or "Lloyd, how are you getting on with Dumas?" to fill her with a new sense of wonder and joy. In short, he had only to exist in her presence to make her realize what music upon music of happiness had lain unawakened in her all these years.

Till she had met him she had never dreamed how one's very body can sing for joy—merely because another human being is talking politics to your husband over his coffee. True, she had always been very happy—that is, very comfortable and contented in her life. The difference between her life as it had been and as it was now was just the difference between affection and ecstasy. Not till Neergaard came had she known transfiguration; and till our lives have been transfigured we do not really live at all.

Neergaard was for her the spiritual vision that she had found nowhere else—not in religion, not in her home life, beautiful and dear to her as it

was; not in nature, not in art; only in Mogens Neergaard.

And for him, in a different way, she was the same revelation. The career of an artist is beset by nothing so much as facile love, but the danger of an artist meeting the one stern, true love is that she usually breaks his heart.

Mogens Neergaard had seemed to know love many times. He had been a notable polytheist of the affections. But now, as he looked back, it seemed to him that all these various loves, charming and beautiful as they had always been, had been wrong ways of loving, meant to teach him the right way of loving, the only way—the love of one man for one woman and of one woman for one man as long as life lasts. His polygamic training had seemed to reveal to him the divine beauty of monogamy. And then, for that very reason, he was able to bring to the woman before whose face all his memories perished like wax, a love pure and undefiled, a love the earth of which had been purged away, a love to which all other loves had been contributory processes. At last, free of its earth, and its roots, and its stem, and its rough sheath—at last love was for him all flower.

So it was for these two people for many months, but at length there came to them the day that will always come; the day when they said to each other: "It is not enough. These few hours are not enough. Better none at all than these margins and remnants of another's days. All the days are rightly ours—ours by right of our love. We cannot live any longer apart from each other."

It was a Summer afternoon, and they stood together knee-deep in a field of marguerites, secluded within the vast seclusion of a June sky.

"I cannot live without you," said Neergaard, as they stood looking into each other's eyes as in a trance.

"I cannot live without you," Veda Hamilton answered, the words fall-

ing from her lips without her knowledge.

Then, all in a dream, they were in each other's arms, and they kissed each other for the first and only time.

After the manner of lovers they gathered each a marguerite and walked slowly from the meadow with happy, sacred eyes.

There, in a moment of exaltation, to which the high heaven was accomplice, they had made that solemn gift to each other which may not be taken back. For a brief moment they had lived in their own world, without thought of any other. They returned to that other as they stepped out on to the dusty highroad—the beaten track of daily life. Then they began to reason, after the manner of this world. In the meadows, among the marguerites, there had seemed no need of reason. On the highroad it was different.

And this reasoning was much like the reasoning of all lovers under like conditions.

"After all, it will be best," Neergaard was saying, "best in the end for him, too"—though he did not explain his second remark; and Mrs. Hamilton made no reply, walking at his side, thinking and thinking.

"Surely the happiness of two is worth more than the happiness of one," he continued, presently.

"Oh, but the pain—his pain," she moaned.

"What of our pain—your pain—my pain?"

"Yes, I know—I know——"

"Has our happiness no rights too?"

"Don't talk, Mogens. I am yours. It is terrible—terrible—but I am yours—now—always—when you will."

"Are you frightened?"

"Yes."

"Would you go back?"

"No."

"I love you."

"I love you."

So at length there had come for Veda Hamilton and Mogens Neer-

gaard love's inevitable hour, when they must either part forever or meet forever. They had promised to meet forever. The greater marriage, they said to each other, had annulled the lesser marriage. They discussed many plans. Neergaard was for going to Hamilton with the simple truth. It was a man's way. Surely it had been the best way—the only way. But the woman shrank from it. There is always a coward somewhere in the bravest, and Veda Hamilton's cowardice was her dread of seeing another's pain. She could not face the thought of seeing her husband's anguish, seeing his life go down, like a shot man, before Neergaard's story.

If Neergaard really wanted her he must steal her—literally carry her away by main force in that chariot of fire of which he had long ago laughingly spoken. She would not resist. It was not Neergaard's way, and the man in him shrank from a course so like that of the common household thief. Yet it was the only way. He must either lose the woman he loved forever or be held for what he was not. After all, when he and she were once together, what would the understanding of a world that necessarily misunderstood most things, mean to them?

The world cannot take away anything from those for whom its gifts are of no value. To lose the good report of the world—and win Veda Hamilton! That was the proposition. Could there be more than one decision to that! The grounds of Mrs. Hamilton's home sloped through gardens and orchards and a brief stretch of natural woodland down to the Hudson itself, where in a miniature bay was a hidden pier. At midnight a small launch would push its way through the branches and moor itself there; and Neergaard would stride up through the woodlands, and the orchards, and the gardens, to carry away his bride.

It was for this reason that Veda Hamilton sat on the balcony watching the sunset, and wondering if

this was really her last night in her home.

So she sat on and sat on, till twilight had become moonlight. Her children came and kissed her good-night. The carpenters had gone home. The Hudson shivered into silver ripples. The real world was put away for the night. The unreal world was coming on duty. The shadows were taking their places. The lights had already come out—gold dots and green dots, and red full stops on the darkening page of the world. Sounds that had no meaning in the sunshine became strangely significant. Dogs barked differently. Little flying things that had waited all day, afraid lest they should be seen, whizzed and squeaked, and were variously happy at their ease. The great silence yawned itself awake, with deep breathing, distant sounds that seemed like the consonance of a dream.

It was the hour when the chair you sit on is all that is left of the solid earth—as if the tide of oblivion had suddenly come up and washed the daylight world away, and left you there alone on your little rock of silence in the star-whispering night.

"Oh, God!" sighed Mrs. Hamilton.

"Which god?" said a little voice out of the darkness. "Please, ma'am," it went on, "I am only one of the humblest of the gods—one of the pantry-gods, so to say; learned people called us the Penates. I am the god that helps to cook the supper that Mr. Hamilton so enjoys when he comes home late from a long day."

"And I, please, ma'am," said another voice out of the shadow, "am Donniduca, the god that watches over his safe coming home."

"Is he not safe?" asked Mrs. Hamilton, in alarm.

"Oh, yes, madam; he has just left Washington by the Congressional Limited."

Mrs. Hamilton turned in the direction of the voices, but the dusk had grown so deep that she could see no one. Yet none the less she was

aware that the door behind her was thronged with appealing, familiar presences.

Soon another voice spoke, quite near to her.

"I am the goddess that watches over the fruit trees," it said. "I am Pomona of the Orchards. I bring the apple blossom and the pear blossom and the cherry bloom. I guard the peaches and the nectarines on the warm wall, and I scare the birds from the strawberry beds."

"I bring the snowdrops and the early violets," said another voice, "and keep the grass thick and cool through the hottest days. The dew and the shadows also are in my care."

"I am the god of the stables and the barns," said another voice. "I watch over the mare in foal, and make sweet the milk in the udder. I dwell in cool dairies and sweet-smelling granaries. I am the genius of the farm."

"I am the guardian of the linen closets," said another voice. "I scatter lavender among the cool, white sheets, and destroy the moth with the pungent odor of camphor."

"I am he who takes care of the pictures and relics of those you have loved," said another voice; "the sacred things that but for me would gather dust in unvisited cupboards and unopened drawers."

"I am she," said another voice, "who guards for you the first baby clothes, the first tiny socks and slippers, and all the firstlings of motherhood."

"I am the god of the dogs and cats," said another voice.

"And I watch over the poultry and keep the new-laid eggs from the rats and the young chickens from the hawk," said another voice.

"I am the god," suddenly broke in another voice, stern and masterful, "that guards your husband's honor."

"I am the memory of your father and mother," said another.

"I am the future of your children," said another.

And while they were all speaking—these and many other gods of the home—the clock slowly struck the hour of twelve.

Then it seemed to her that, without her own will, she had risen from her chair, the persuasion of many little hands upon her skirts and the grip of one stern hand upon her wrist.

"Come indoors! Come indoors!" voices all around her seemed to be calling. "There is danger out here. Come indoors."

Then she found herself in her bedroom, sitting near the window, with a stunned sense of loss—loss wide as, oh, far wider than, the world.

Presently there stole to her ears the far sound of a violin. It was Neergaard playing as he came up through the gardens.

Nearer and nearer the music came, till at last it stopped, as in angry surprise, beneath her window. She could hear Neergaard's impatient tread on the balcony. She heard him walk to the door and try it. But the stern god that had taken her by the wrist held her still more firmly.

Then suddenly he was calling her once more with his violin.

At first the strings were all entreaty, wistful and tender; but as he played on they grew stormy with passion and angry with reproach.

He no longer pleaded; he demanded her in the name of his love.

The great god was calling her outside, but the little gods inside, the little gods of the home, held her fast.

At last she could bear it no more. Stiffly she rose from her chair and called strangely to him through the window.

"Good-bye, Mogens," she called; "it cannot be."

Then the music ceased.

And the little gods laughed low and nudged each other, and pattered back to their cupboards through the silent house.

But the heart of the great god was broken.

THE LAST ANALYSIS

SHE understands the rule of three,
 And eke spheroids oblate,
 And miracles with x , y , z ,
 Performs she while I wait.
 But oh, 'tis sweet her little feet
 The while to contemplate!

Her wit is like a needle's point—
 She sharpens it on mine;
 Her logic racks mine out of joint,
 When she may so incline.
 But oh, her eyes are like the skies
 When June is most divine!

She emulates Demosthenes—
 A man I should avoid;
 With eloquence she aims to please,
 Till I am fairly cloyed.
 But soon she slips, for oh, her lips
 Are otherwise employed!

CURTIS DUNHAM.



THE FEMININE WAY

"SHE is always jumping to conclusions."
 "Yes, I know she is a great reader of novels."



EXTENT OF HIS KNOWLEDGE

KITTY said she'd teach to me
 The dance-step last invented,
 To which, of course, I heartily,
 With rising hope, assented.

So first I learned, with eager haste,
 And found the lesson pleasant,
 To put my arm about her waist—
 That's all I know at present.

JAMES BARRETT KIRK.

BY WAY OF A WAGER

By John Tompkins

THE WAGER

"**D**ONE!" said Dorcas; "and remember, if I win it's to be no twopenny ring, but something quite magnificent."

"If you win," I replied.

It was a hazardous wager for me to make, more hazardous than I dreamed. To suppose on such an evening, when the moonlight shimmered on the piazza through the vines, when the honeysuckle made all the air fragrant and the flutter of love's wings could almost be heard, that Dorcas—such a girl as Dorcas—could not, within a half-hour, if she set her mind to it, have three men at her feet, offering her their hands, hearts and fortunes—why, my bet was as good as lost in the making. Yet I stood firm.

"If you will sit here and not interrupt, I'll show you how it's done," said she, and with a wave of her hand ran off.

I lighted a cigar and puffed meditatively. Whom would she choose as victims for her game? I felt a bit sorry for them—it was hardly square to the fellows. Still, the bet was on. Scarce had I moved my chair back into the shadow when I heard footsteps coming toward me. Evidently she was not idling.

II

THE WINNING

In a moment I distinguished her voice. It's curious what she can do with her voice. Her laugh—well, it cannot be denied that there is something devilishly alluring in her laugh; and her sigh! it makes a man feel he

must take her in his arms and comfort and soothe her.

"It is strange," I heard her say, "and yet I, too, feel as if I had known you for years instead of just an hour."

Oh, the flatterer! Oh, the deceiving minx!

"Strange!" echoed a man's low voice, and I recognized it as that of Norris, who is known for his indifference to the fair; "don't say that. It's the naturalness of it that's so sweet to me."

Who would have thought Norris could do it so nicely?

"Ah, here's a lovely place," Dorcas replied, softly, "where we can be alone together, away from everybody," and her tone made it seem as if there were a wide world beyond, but here a paradise with none therein save Dorcas and Harry Norris.

They seated themselves on a settee. I could see that there was no unnecessary space between them.

"How is it," she asked, somewhat complainingly, perhaps, "that you don't care for girls?—for that's what everybody says," and she turned to me with the faintest giggle. I could guess what answer she expected.

"Can you ask so simple a question?" he replied, "since I never met you before?"

"Do you—do you—" I could hear her quickened breathing—"do you really mean that? It makes me so happy to hear you say it, if you do mean it, if you really do!" And ah! the trusting simplicity of her voice.

I felt inclined to laugh; but suddenly it struck me that she had used the same tones to me more than once.

"Dorcas," he said, tensely—"for I may call you that, may I not?"

"I suppose so," she whispered, and her head swayed ever so slightly toward his shoulder.

"Dorcas, dear heart, it seems so wonderful that in one short hour——"

"What?" she interrupted, breathlessly; and in the moonlight I could see her glance in my direction.

I was sorry I had made the wager—not because she was going to win, for I saw that there was no help for that, but because of the fellows who were helping her to. But what could I do? To interrupt would be damnablely disagreeable for everybody; besides, it would be a crawl, and I never back out of a bet. I remained silent.

"It's strange what joy it gives me to run my hand through your hair," he remarked, irrelevantly. I had not been counting on that as a part of the game. That was one particular thing I counted as my special and exclusive privilege. So I told Dorcas afterward.

Dorcas sighed.

I heard a sound that I could swear was a kiss. If I had not counted on his bothering her hair, surely I had not counted on this. "Ah, dear Henry," Dorcas whispered. It should be noted that she did not say Harry. Henry is much more serious.

"And do you think you could love me?" he asked, and, confound it! again I heard that sound as of a kiss.

"It is so short a time," she murmured.

"Ah, do not measure love by hours," he exclaimed, "when every moment with you has been an infinity of love, an eternity of bliss, a wilderness of rapture!" Really this was maudlin.

"True love," he went on—and from the space they occupied a setttee appeared scarcely necessary—"is a flower that blooms in an instant, Dorcas. Be mine, then; give me your heart; take me, I implore, for yours."

I suppose he wondered at her reply.

"That's one," said she, and glanced at her watch.

"Answer me," he cried. It was a downright shame to cheat the man so.

"Not yet," she answered. "Come, let's go; at any rate, you make love beautifully," and she ran away laughing, he at her heels.

That was one in ten minutes. I determined to confess myself beaten and cry quits. These encroachments on my exclusive privileges were irritating. But after all I have a good deal of curiosity, and a wager is a wager. I moved my chair so that I might see better the next time. Nor had I long to wait. Who could it be now, I wondered?

"Yes," a slow voice drawled, "I'm having my yacht put in commission. But it's a beastly bore, steaming round."

A good sportswoman was Dorcas. She had chosen to try the most difficult, the wildest game. For it was Harvey Van Horne who was talking. Van Horne is a good forty years of age, indeed; bald, ugly and with a past as spotted as a leopard's skin, but he has a bank account, bonds, stocks and good first mortgages. Mammass gaze on him with approving eyes.

"I should think it would be lovely to go sailing wherever you please," Dorcas replied, as they perched themselves on the rail of the piazza.

"Do you?" he remarked, condescendingly. "Perhaps some day I'll take you. That is, if you can stand being away from that fool Tompkins."

Once more Dorcas looked in my direction, and laughed more than I thought necessary.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "you don't think I care for *him*, do you? He's just a convenience," which was unkind of her. "Besides," she continued, sadly, "you're not always here."

"But really, you know, Miss Hastings—Miss, eh—Miss Dorcas," and deuce take the man, he began sliding toward her along the piazza rail, "really it's a bore to have him always in the way."

"Indeed it is; but how *can* I get rid of the creature? He will persist in following me," Dorcas helplessly replied, looking up into Van Horne's eyes. Dorcas was enjoying herself.

"So you would like to come sailing on my yacht?" he repeated.

"I should dearly love to; to be with you—nobody else to bother us; to go sailing over the ocean with only the blue skies above, and always with *you*," she cried, rapturously.

A black bank of clouds crossed the moon's path. It was impossible to see them.

"Oh, Mr. Van Horne! oh, Harvey!" whispered Dorcas, reproachfully, "how could you? Don't, don't do that; please, please; when it's only that you care for, and not for me."

Oh, the witch! the jade! They rose and moved to the settee. A settee is more convenient than a piazza rail. It was quite out of earshot. Eavesdropping, I determined, was, after all, not good form. I determined not to listen. After a time I discovered that the chair I was sitting in was a most uncomfortable chair. When I had got seated in another Van Horne was saying: "I'm sure your mother will approve of the engagement being short; there is really no sense in delay," and his arms enfolded her.

"Let us not tell anyone to-night," she whispered; "let it be just our secret."

The flirt! the jilt! the coquette! By heaven, this was not the bet; she had wagered three men would propose in a half-hour, but not a word was said about her accepting them. It had gone too far. I rose, pushed back my chair and coughed.

"It's Tompkins," said he. "I hope he heard; then he'll let you alone." The cad! Suppose I *had* heard—was it any business of his?

I followed them down the piazza toward the ballroom. I saw them standing at the door. What an ass I had been to make that wager! She looked up at him, her blue eyes dancing, a smile on her lips. The light

from the hotel lobby fell on her hair, making a kind of golden halo about her head; her slim white arms hung straight beside her. He caught her two hands in his and bent over and kissed them; then she left him and hurried down the piazza in my direction.

"Did you hear it all?" she asked, gleefully, when she joined me. "That's two."

"Now look here," I replied, "when you let Norris run his hand through your hair, that was going much too far, but to let him kiss you—by Jove, Dorcas, you ought to be ashamed of yourself; it's not decent!"

Her lip drooped penitently. "But I do want to win the bet," said she.

"I could pass all that by, I could forgive you that, but what can you mean by accepting Van Horne? That's what I want to know—what do you mean by it? That was no part of the bet." I took her hand angrily. "What do you mean by it?" I cried.

She looked up at me. "I wish," she replied, with some asperity, "you would not speak so of the man I am going to marry."

"What!" I exclaimed, "Van Horne! You mean to marry him? Don't say it, Dorcas; you know you love me; you know I am mad for love of you; you know you are going to marry me."

She looked at her watch and laughed blithely. "There are two minutes lacking to the half-hour. Shall I tell you what sort of a ring I want? You've lost the bet, you know."

What did I care about the bet? Hadn't I won her? I burst into laughter. "So it was just to get a proposal from me?" and I caught her in my arms.

"And one of the most difficult things I ever tried to do," laughed Dorcas. "Ah, I shall never again make such a bet; a half-hour is much too short to do the thing artistically. It ought to be done without letting the man lay his hands on one. That requires some skill."

"But now that we are engaged, what will you do with Van Horne?"

"Didn't he say nice things of you?" she replied. "Oh, dear, it was too funny!" and she threw herself back into the armchair, gurgling with laughter.

"But," I persisted, "what about him?"

She took my hand and held it in both her own. For a little she was silent. "Dear boy," said she then, looking at me thoughtfully, "I really think I shall marry him."

"You hurt me, dear, I——"

She interrupted, "I know all you want to say; of course, dear boy, you like me. They all do, you know. You can't blame me for that. I don't do anything, and I can't help the way I am. I'll admit even that you like me more than the rest, but Jack, dear, you don't really love me, you know."

I tried to speak. She laid her hand on my lips. "I know what you want to say. You want to tell me there never was such love as yours, and all that. I know. You believe it, too. But you don't really love me. If you did, Jack, you never would have made that bet."

"Sweetheart——" I began.

"You couldn't have stood by and let them kiss me," she continued, "not if you really love me. Besides, Jack, we couldn't get married, anyway. Love in a cottage is well enough, but I don't want to live on Staten Island, or in Brooklyn, or in East Orange; and ferry-boats are dreadfully smelly; and I'm frightfully extravagant, and I really must have a new chinchilla coat next Winter; and I do so like to have a man waiting at table; and I'm so fond of driving, and then a box at the opera is not so bad."

"But without love!" I cried.

"Nobody who couldn't afford a box at the opera could really, truly love me," she laughed.

"Dorcas, I swear I love you; only give me the chance to prove it."

She bent suddenly toward me; she kissed me lightly. I could feel her hair brush my forehead.

"You do love me!" I exclaimed, joyfully.

"It's a good-bye kiss," said she; "the last one, I guess."

"If you knew how I love you!"

"If you really did, Jack," said she, and though she laughed gaily, I swear her lips trembled.

III

I RECEIVE AN INVITATION

How many times I cursed that confounded wager during the next two months who can say? How many times I went over the scenes of that last half-hour, picturing myself as stepping forth and pushing Norris aside, or crying a halt to Van Horne's kisses, it would take long to count. But what can a fellow do? If I gave up smoking perhaps I might invest in the chinchilla; but even if I stopped eating, the opera box would still be out of the question. Besides, eating is a habit I should hate to give up. In a month, they said, she was to be married.

I went down to breakfast and found a letter waiting me on the table. I looked at the writing on the envelope. It was Dorcas's. In these two months she had grown to be a sort of dream to me; something unreal. Then there was such a person, after all! My heart gave a sudden leap; it was all over, then; I had known all along it would be; she could never marry Van Horne; and she was sending for me. I learned in that instant better than I had known ever before how my arms ached to hold her—yes, and I would chide her for waiting too long; she had behaved badly, and I should tell her so; but I would soon forgive her. Why deny it?—I kissed the envelope. We are poor creatures, we men.

I opened the envelope and took out the heavy engraved paper it contained. It was a request from Mr. and Mrs. Lansing Hastings for the honor of my presence at the wedding of their daughter to Mr. Harvey Van Horne. I held it in my hand.

"Sure, Mr. John," said Bridget, "your coffee is getting all cold."

When I got to my office my partner greeted me with enthusiasm. "What do you think of this, Jack?" he exclaimed, and handed me a check for a thousand dollars. "It is a retainer from the Williamson-Jenkins Company," and he proceeded to tell me the facts. "Well," he asked, when he was done, "don't you think it would be easy to effect a combination between the two?"

"There is no hope of it," said I, lugubriously.

My partner stared at me.

IV

SINCERE REGRETS

I CONSUMED many vexing moments for a week trying to frame a suitable yet suggestive reply to the invitation. Here is a copy of the final result. It seems simple, yet it was the work of hours:

Mr. John Tompkins acknowledges the honor of your invitation to the wedding of your daughter, but regrets that his presence, as a guest, will be impossible.

No one could take umbrage at it; and yet if Dorcas wished to see the meaning she could do so. I enclosed the phrase "as a guest" between somewhat heavy commas. To make sure she should get it I addressed the envelope to her; which, I fear, was not good form.

The next afternoon, as I sat at my desk working over the Williamson-Jenkins matter, my telephone bell rang. I put the receiver to my ear.

"Hello!" said I, "who is this?"

"Is this Mr. Tompkins?" a feminine voice asked.

"Who is this, please?" I repeated, with some irritation, for I like my questions answered.

There was a laugh. Nobody in the world but Dorcas laughed like that.

"This is Mr. Tompkins," said I, in my politest tone.

"I am Mrs. Hastings," she replied, trying—dear girl—to disguise her voice.

"So long as it is not Mrs. Van Horne," said I.

Dorcas giggled. "And I desire to say, Mr. Tompkins, that both my daughter and myself regard your reply to the invitation to her wedding as a piece of quite unwarranted impertinence."

"Tell Miss Hastings," said I, "that I regret to have offended her; but," and I put as much significance into my voice as a man can when he is talking through a telephone, "but that, great as my happiness would be to attend her wedding under other circumstances, the lack of an engagement renders it impossible."

"It is a poor excuse," she remarked.

"The best in the world," said I.

"And," she added, "Miss Hastings directs me to remind you that you have failed to pay a bet."

"Will she let me pay it?" I cried, eagerly.

"It is a matter of indifference to her, save as she desires to give you an opportunity of fulfilling your obligations."

I held my hand over the telephone. I was unwilling that she should hear the joy of my laughter. I thought I would try an experiment.

"Tell Miss Hastings that I shall, at the very earliest chance, send her what I owe her," said I.

There was a moment's silence. Dorcas was thinking.

"Perhaps Miss Hastings may prefer it delivered in person," she suggested. My experiment had succeeded.

"I could be there in forty minutes," said I.

"That will not be convenient," she declared.

"To-night, then?" I asked.

"At a quarter to nine," said she.

V

I PAY MY BET

I PACED up and down her parlor. It was twenty minutes after eight. Strange, thought I, that cars that ran so slowly should have got me here by now. My hands were in my

trousers pockets, one hand fingering a little box containing a solitaire ring of size, brilliance and cost quite exceeding what I had any right to purchase; the other—for it was never safe to guess anything in advance about Dorcas, and she might only be trying to be revenged for my note—fingering another box containing a “La Vallière”—I think that is the name—at any rate, one of those little chains with two rough pearls that look like teeth—the things girls are wearing nowadays, and less expensive than the ring.

I dared hope that the more expensive gift might be hers; I counted on returning “La Vallière” to the jeweler. There I counted wrongly, alas! But I bear my disappointment with equanimity.

I looked at the picture of her on the mantelpiece which I had often scanned while waiting for her. It is a good picture, but it gives no idea of her charm, for it is always the same, while she is always different.

I heard her come in; but I kept looking at the picture. I could see her through the mirror and she could not see me. The picture shows her smiling. She did not look like the picture. She was pale and serious. Finally I turned and looked gravely at her.

“Mr. Tompkins!” she exclaimed, in a well-studied tone of amazement, “I never expected to see you.”

It was too much. I broke out laughing. She followed suit. My fingers nervously twitched about the boxes that held the jewels. I wondered for the moment what to say. But what, after all, was the use of beating about the bush? I took one of the boxes out of my pocket and handed it to her.

“To pay my bet,” I explained.

She opened the clasp of the box, and took out—the pearls.

“But,” she objected, “it was to be a ring.”

Hang it! I had given her the wrong box. Well, it was a mistake that would save me, no doubt, from making an ass of myself.

“Have I a right to give you the ring?” I whispered.

“One should pay one’s bets,” and she gazed at me—yes, wistfully.

“Well, if she is bent on making a fool of me, here goes,” thought I. I drew the other box from my pocket, pulled it open and produced the ring. Then I took hold of both her hands to make sure. For the first time I noticed she wore no ring at all. I slipped the ring on her finger.

“But it’s an engagement ring,” she said, wonderingly.

“But we are engaged,” said I, decisively; and I did something that I had been wanting to do ever since she came into the room.

“You really have such a nice way of kissing,” she sighed, when—after a time—she had a chance to speak. “And,” she added, irrelevantly, “I went over to Brooklyn the other day and saw some of the dearest little cottages. And the pearls are lovely.”

So, though I paid my bet, she kept the pearls.

And oh, about Van Horne? He has just gone off on a cruise to Corea with a party of guests, all men. I suppose that is why Dorcas and I received no invitation. And about the Williamson-Jenkins matter—Dorcas ordered a chinchilla coat yesterday. At first she was unwilling to, but when I commanded she obeyed. It is wonderful how she obeys me—in such matters. I have not given up smoking. Dorcas has decided, however, that the opera is a bore—it takes so long to go from the opera house to Brooklyn. Brooklyn, by the way, is, as Dorcas and I think, the most beautiful place in the world.



INVOCATION

By Charles G. D. Roberts

O VOICE,

Whose sound is as the falling of the rain
On harp-strings strung in casements by the sea,
Low with all passion, poignant with all pain,
In dreams, out of thy distance, come to me.
I hear no music if I hear not thee.

O Hands,

Whose touch is like the balm of apple-bloom
Brushed by the winds of April from the bough,
Amid the passionate memories of this room
Flower out, sweet hands, a presence in the gloom,
And touch my longing mouth and cool my brow.

O Eyes,

Whose least look is a flame within my soul,
(Still burns that first long look, across the years!)
Lure of my life, and my desire's control,
Illume me and my darkness disappears.
Seeing you not, my eyes see naught for tears.

O Lips,

The rose's lovelier sisters, you whose breath
Seems the consummate spirit of the rose—
Honey and fire, delirium and repose,
And that long dream of love that laughs at death—
All these, all these your scarlet blooms enclose.

O Hair,

Whose shadows hold the mystery of a shrine
Heavy with vows and worship, where the pale
Priests who pour out their souls in incense pine
For dead loves unforget—be thou the veil
To my heart's altar, secret and divine.

O Voice, O Hands, O Eyes, O Lips, O Hair,
Of your strange beauty God Himself hath care,
So deep the riddle He hath wrought therein—
Whether for love's delight, or love's despair.



THE ballet girl cannot be charged with affectation; she puts on less than anyone else in the company.

Oct. 1901

THE INCONSISTENT POET

ONCE a Poet praised a Bird,
That his praises overheard.

Thought the Bird, "Oh, rare delight!
I will sing to him all night."

Long it sang, and somewhat shrill,
On the Poet's window-sill,

Till the Bard, grown wroth and grim,
Made a Silent Bird of him.

But, next day, this Poet signed
Sixteen sonnets ere he dined,

Having heard that someone is
Quoting certain lines of his.

ARTHUR UPSON.



COULD NOT FACE DISGRACE

THE WIFE—I understand that the man they rescued from the burning
building tried to commit suicide.

THE HUSBAND—No wonder. He had on a pair of pajamas his wife had
made for him.



AND HE SWITCHED OFF

HE thought he had the "inside track;"
He stood beside her chair,
And deftly stole, behind her back,
A lock of gleaming hair.
A lock of gleaming hair.
But when he told her, she condoned
His theft and thus confessed:
" 'Twas off the oldest switch I owned—
Tom Travers has the rest."

JENNIE O. LOIZEAUX.



A WORD to the fathers—If there were fewer fatted calves there would be
fewer prodigal sons.

A BOUQUET OF ILLUSIONS

By Edgar Saltus

"H AS the *Figaro* again succeeded in losing itself?"

The temperature was heavenly. I had had a beautiful swim in the beautiful sea. I had breakfasted on dishes a poet had prepared. The evening previous I had passed with some of the most agreeable people in Europe. At baccarat, the night before, I had managed without effort to rid myself of ill-gotten gains. I had not a care on my mind, a regret on my conscience, a speck on my shoes. In spite of which, or perhaps precisely on that account, as I stood that morning in the reading-room of the Cercle de Biarritz I found nothing better to do than to affect annoyance because the *Figaro* was not under my monocle.

"Pardon, monsieur," said the lackey to whom I had spoken. "Behold a gentleman who is reading it."

I had beheld the gentleman before. Who he was I did not know; but, to use a localism of the land, he had intrigued me. He had the appearance of a Somebody, the distinction that study and suffering bring. He suggested perspectives and possibilities that the entirely amiable yet perfectly aimless dukes and princes by whom the club was frequented neglected to supply. Merely in the manner in which he turned his head there was manifest that preoccupation which is characteristic of those whose existence is cerebral. Twice already I had met him—once with one of the little Pignatelli princesses and once with the Prime Minister; but on each occasion his name had escaped me. Yet not the *timbre* of his voice. It was grave and deep, and presently in

his beautiful baritone he addressed me, recalling an incident that had occurred at the Casino and asking whether I had won.

"*Le baccarat apporte, emporte mais ne rapporte pas*," I answered, and after a few other platitudes I gathered up the *Figaro*, which meanwhile he had offered me. When I put it down he had gone.

On the morrow I met him on the road that skirts the Chambre d'Amour and that through kilomètres of pines leads to the Adour, a river so beautiful in itself that all the ingenuity of Bayonne has been unable to make it wholly hideous. The next day I ran into him at Bidart, a hamlet so silent that you might fancy it enchanted by the spells and marvels of its languid afternoons. And again I encountered him on the Route d'Espagne, than which even the Corniche is not lovelier.

On these occasions we rode awhile together, and in the process I discovered that he was alarmingly learned. He appeared to have been everywhere, met everybody and studied everything. He appeared, too, to be remarkably intuitive, and flattered me—very basely, I have since thought—by telling me I was a born novelist. "And there are precious few," he was insidious enough to add.

As a result I found him highly interesting. It is, I believe, a recognized fact that though you may have in yourself nothing that particularly appeals to your neighbor, yet if that neighbor appeals to you, at once a bond is created. Admiration is like

love and like light, a fluid that affects us unconsciously. And so it fell about that on the evening of the day on which I met him on the Route d'Espagne, the effect of which I speak—unless, indeed, it were some other—became obvious. He did me the honor to take me into his confidence.

I remember that evening as never any since. The dusk had been sudden. The ocean resembled nothing so much as an immense blue syrup. The sky after hesitating between dead rose and apple-green chose a lapis-lazuli, which it changed to indigo, and with that for ballroom the stars came out and danced. To enjoy their sarabands I had seated myself on the balcony of the club. It was there he joined me. At the moment it rather annoyed me that he should do so. I was alone with the Infinite, and I know of no better companion. But all this he appeared to divine, and gravely, in his beautiful voice, said:

"I fear I interrupt a tête-à-tête."

To a remark so spacious in its compliment, what the dickens could I do except to express my pleasure? That expression I noticed he accepted as only his due, and presently he began monologuing—a trifle pontifically, it seemed to me—on the avatar and the sheer bliss of believing that hereafter we shall vagabond from sphere to sphere of increasing delights until peace sleeps upon us as dawn upon the sea.

"That peace will be grateful," I interjected.

"All peace is," he answered. "But on earth there is none. For me, at least," he hastened to add. "Would you regard it, sir, as indiscreet if I venture to tell you why?"

A wretched Latin stupidity about nothing human being extraneous slipped from my tongue. But, however stupid, it must have contained the invitation he sought. In his alluring way he began at once talking very fascinatingly about a fascinating girl.

"Believe me, sir, that merely in

raising her arms she exhaled the reason of love. She affected me as no one ever had, as no one now ever can. It was at Dammartin I met her first. Among our *vieilles chansons* there is one that runs:

*"À Dammartin l'y a trois belles filles
L'y en a z'une plus belle que le jour—*

"The song, though old, seemed made for her. It accompanied and announced her. It was part of the rustle of her skirts. I can hear it now as I can hear the rustle. For years the echo of both have haunted me. There have been days without number and nights without end when it seemed to me that echo would drive me mad. On one occasion I was convinced it had. But that was long afterward. At the time she filled my life, or perhaps it would be more exact to say she filled my dreams. For of my life she herself had little part. It was the vision of her that possessed me. She represented the goal in that eternal steeplechase after happiness in which, shirted and capped in the colors of hope, we all take part. Does it not seem to you, sir, that few of us get there? We either fall by the way or miss it entirely. It was my misfortune—a misfortune by no means unique—to have been thrown at the last hurdle. A furlong more and the cup was mine. Dear God! how I strove to get it! Perhaps, had I succeeded, it would have lost its savor. It may be that happiness is what we think it, but on condition that we think it is what we have not got. It may be that had she cared for me I should have ceased to care for her. The fact that she did not may have been the woof of my love. Paradise lies always just beyond. The thirst for the unobtainable consumes us all. What abysses the human heart conceals! But pardon me, I am wearying you with this story."

"On the contrary," I answered, "*c'est du Bourget.*"

He smiled. Evidently the reply had pleased him. "Do you care for his work?" he asked.

In any fabric it is easy to pick holes. But when praise is expected I have found it easier to supply it. It saves time, labor and breath. "Enormously," I replied. "But you were saying——"

"Ah, yes," he continued. "Well, you have now the central situation. At first I was part of the landscape to her. Presently on that landscape I succeeded in becoming a blur. She was interested, and had been since her childhood, as I afterward learned, in a cousin, a young man named, let us say, de Machin, but he had nothing, and her people, who belonged to the small nobility, had less. Now, in your country, among your *milliardaires*, I should be out at elbows, but, everything being relative, at Dammartin I was rich. As a consequence, when I asked it was given. But you will understand, of course, what I at the time did not, that her people forced her hand. Meanwhile her indifference to me, which was patent, I regarded but as the normal attitude of the unimpressed *jeune fille*. After marriage I told myself it would be my care and my joy—and what a joy!—to change that attitude. Sir, I did change it, but I changed it from indifference into detestation. Sir, did I but touch her she shuddered. My presence was torture to her, and that torture of hers was agony to me. *Mais passons*. A fairer bride I at least have never seen. Her eyes were pools of purple, her mouth a scarlet thread. In a week the flush on her face had faded, the light from her eyes had gone. In a fortnight she was haggard. In a month she was dead."

My attention had wandered. From that which Mr. Swinburne has catalogued as the golden, remote wild West, a memory had surged. I was re-living an episode that had aromatized my youth. But at this climax I started.

"Yes," he repeated, "dead." He raised his hands and waved them. "Like that. In a minute. It was the heart, they said, that poor little fragile heart of hers which my adoring

but awkward hands had broken.

... We Latins, sir, are perhaps more emotional than you. In any event, I collapsed. During the obsequies that ensued each minute was a separate death. Sir, it is said we should hasten to cherish those whom we love lest they leave us forever before we have loved them enough. Therein was the bitterness of it. Though in the few brief weeks during which we were together I had cherished her to the point of idolatry, I knew and felt, and it killed me to know it and feel it, that I had cherished her better had I seemed not to cherish her at all. Perhaps then she would have consented to remain, and who knows but that in after years—perhaps, too, of her own accord—she would have put her hand in mine. For there are dreams that come true, are there not? Mine, though, was done. I tried to forget—not to remember, rather—but with grief who shall argue? To exorcise it one of our moralists has noted that there is but Time and Silence. It occurred to me that he should have added Work. I turned to mathematics, as another might to drink. Its problems, indeed, vacated my mind of her, yet, once solved, there in haunting loveliness she stood. 'I am damned!' I kept repeating, and ultimately, in a final effort to get away from myself, I took to travel. Sir, believe me, in conditions such as mine travel is as futile as study. Wherever I went I found myself there in waiting. I found her, too, grief as well. Who was it—Ariosto?—that said:

*"Da me stesso sempre fuggendo
Avro me sempre appresso."*

"I had journeyed to Valparaiso and from there to Florence before I realized the hideous truth those lines contain. The memory of her became an obsession which, battering on me by day, plucked in sleep at my sleeve, woke me, sat at my side and talked torrentially of her. Grief had convoluted into monomania, and one day, as I have already mentioned, I told

myself that I was mad—yes, and anyone else would have deemed me so, too—for I felt that I had seen her, or rather I felt that my crumbling brain had from its ruins projected an illusion of the ghost of the dead.

"I was then in Florence. The illusion had occurred in that lovely park that is called the Cascine. It seemed to me that she passed me there, rapidly, in a carriage; so rapidly that in an instant she had gone. Abruptly everything grew dim. There came to me the curious and by no means enviable sensation of falling from an inordinate height, a sense of struggle with the intangible and the void into which my brain seemed to tip. When finally, on the morrow, it righted sufficiently, I got to the French Consulate, where I obtained the address of a physician, on whom I then called and to whom in detail I related the story I have summarized to you. 'I am mad, am I not?' I asked him by way of conclusion.

"*'Pas plus qu'un autre,'* he replied. *'Tout le monde est plus ou moins fou.'* You may have a delusion or two. What of it? Delusions are very delightful. What should we do without them? Yours, however, are not very complex. You fancy that you have seen a lady who is dead. In reality you have seen someone who resembles her. I think I can convince you of that. Afterward, if you will but convince yourself of the inutility of grief, you will say *bon jour* to an obsession. My carriage is at the door. Favor me."

"Driving, sir, as no doubt you know better than I, is the chief Florentine distraction. At the hour when this gentleman invited me to accompany him all the elegance of the Lung' Arno was in the park. Thither we proceeded. Hardly had we reached it when I clutched him by the arm. *'La voilà!'* I cried. For there, in a victoria, with a man whom I knew at her side, sat my wife.

"The doctor smiled, raised his hat and turned to me. 'That is Mme. de Machin, one of my patients, a charming woman, of whom I shall ask leave to present you.'

"'But, doctor,' I cried, 'de Machin, the man with her, is the man with whom she was in love.'

"'Precisely,' the doctor, with entire calm, replied, 'and a very amiable individual he is. His wife is in love with him, too. His wife, though, is not your wife. Your wife is dead. You are not, however, on that account the dupe of an illusion; you are merely forgetting the psychological fact that a man cares not necessarily for one particular woman, but for one particular feminine type. De Machin consoled himself for the loss of the young gentlewoman who became your wife by marrying a lady who resembled her. Affection is merely an instinct when it does not happen to be a habit.'

"Dosing me with little platitudes of this kind the doctor ran on. As you will readily believe, they left me unaffected. I was at once firmly convinced that my wife was resurrected, and equally convinced that the conviction was the figment of my disordered brain. But divining the inutility of argument, and fearing, moreover, that did I persist, the doctor might, in view of my condition, retract his offer, I managed to appear relieved.

"'You are a magician,' I said to him. 'An hour ago I was ready for a strait-jacket. Since then, through your wizardry, an illusion has been ablated. You have but now to enable me to exchange speech with this lady and the marvel of your cure will be complete. Without indiscretion, when shall that be?'

"We had reached the hotel at which I was stopping. 'Not later than to-morrow,' he answered, and left me at the door.

"That morrow never came. The next day I waited him in vain. The day after I went to his bureau. He was not at home. I left a note reminding him of his promise and asking when I should see him again. In the course of the evening I received a reply appointing an hour on the following day. But of the promise and its fulfilment not a word. In the circum-

stances there was nothing to do but to wait, and burning with fever I waited. Finally, as arranged, he appeared.

"All my excuses," he exclaimed at once. "And how are our little delusions to-day? Entirely evaporated?"

"And that lady?" I asked.

"That lady? What lady? Oh, yes. Yes. Yes. Mme. de Machin. Yes, indeed. Well, I have not enjoyed the pleasure of seeing her since the other afternoon."

"He was lying. I saw he was lying, and he saw that I saw that he was."

"Tell me the truth," I muttered.

"The truth, the truth," he repeated, sparring, as it seemed to me, for wind. "What is truth?—verity to one, error to another, an elenchism fit only to be concealed."

"Never from him who is worthy to hear it," I replied.

"He had been walking up and down, throwing his hands about, tossing his head. But at this he stopped short and looked me in the eyes. Apparently the scrutiny satisfied him."

"Worthy, yes," he answered at last. His manner had changed, his tone as well. He spoke now very gravely. "But are you fit?"

"Comprehending that only manifest calm could seduce him, I ran my nails into my flesh and answered, 'I am resigned.'"

"He opened his mouth, closed it, ran his fingers through his hair, drew a chair next to me, proceeded to feel my pulse, and without warning, but with the same gravity, said, very slowly, 'I have the regret to inform you that that lady was your wife.' His hand was still on my wrist, but it had tightened. The precaution was useless. I had fainted away."

"Sir, an hour later I was in possession of myself and of the facts. From them it appeared that after the funeral, de Machin, with the object of securing a lock of her hair, had gone to the tomb. There something convinced him that she had been prematurely buried. He carried her off, revived her, and she, touched by such a proof of love—for it was one—left with him for Florence."

"According to the law of France, and for that matter, of Italy, my rights were clear. I had but to demand that she return to my domicile. In due course that demand I made. But there was a point I had overlooked. Registered as dead, the registry was incapable of revision. And my wife, though actually living, legally was dead to me."

He paused, drew out a large cigar, lighted it with studious care, contemplated the stars for a moment and presently, in an everyday tone, inquired casually, as if he were asking the time, "Do you see any climax?"

The question, joined to his change of manner, seemed to me so surprising that my bewilderment must have answered for me. Immediately, in the same light, but with an entirely contented smile, he added:

"In your quality of novelist, I mean. If not, should one occur to you, will you—unless, as I fear, I have bored you too dreadfully—will you, when next we meet, tell me how you think such a tale should end?"

He rose, raised his hat, passed into the hall to the door beyond.

At the exit the porter stood.

"Who is that gentleman?" I asked.

"That gentleman," he repeated.

"Why, sir, I thought you knew him. That gentleman is M. Paul Bourget, the celebrated romancer."



IN THE ART GALLERY

BOBBY—Pa, is that a masterpiece?

FATHER—Not yet, my son; but it may be some day. The artist is still quite young.

TO MY POCKETBOOK

OH, thou barometer of my finance!
 How pleased it makes me when I see thee fat!
 And then, again, how grieved to find thee flat
 Just at a time when, strapped by circumstance,
 I need thee most my fortunes to advance!
 How comes it, tell me, when I love like that,
 Thou shouldst desert me?—for, without a sprat,
 In this hard world poor man has little chance.

Hadst thou stood by me in my hour of need
 That rich man's daughter fate threw in my way
 I might have married, and with the amount
 She brought me we'd have tasted joy indeed.
 Then it had been my care to keep each day
 Thy sides plethoric with her bank account.

JAMES JAY O'CONNELL.



AN UNNECESSARY ENCUMBRANCE

DAISY—I have made up my mind to enter society.
 HARDHEAD—What has your mind got to do with it?



HOW CARELESS!

HE asked his love to marry him,
 By letter she replied;
 He read her firm refusal,
 Then shot himself and died.
 He might have been alive to-day,
 And she his happy bride,
 If he had read the *postscript*
 Upon the other side.

CICELY CINNARON.



BY THE SAD SEA WAVES

DE SAPPY—My wife had a hard time getting me.
 MISS SHARPE—I understand she went to a lot of trouble for nothing.

THE BLACK SWAN

By Julien Gordon

(Mrs. Van Rensselaer Cruger)

EVER since the death of Mamert de Damesin she had worn black. She said it was because he was the only person who had ever loved her. At the auction of his wardrobe she ran up the bids for his old green velvet corset to three francs sixty-five centimes, and carried it away wrapped in a bit of dirty newspaper. This piece of sentiment greatly impressed the few stragglers in the miserable garret where the old ballet master's effects were exposed to view in all their grim shabbiness. She alone followed him to the grave on that gray, piercing day of December when they huddled him away through the streets of Paris to his cold resting place. He had bought for himself a *fosse* in Montmartre during his last illness, and had even given elaborate directions as to his funeral arrangements. Mamert had a great deal of pride. Pride is not a conquering virtue. It was perhaps because of his pride that he had died on the straw. With his large self-respect, his exhaustless vanity, his love of etiquette, order and *le distingué*, he had counted, perhaps, on a turn-out of all the coryphées, on an oration, on an *éloge*, before the curtain should finally ring down on his forlorn little drama. But only the Black Swan remembered. Her grief was expressed by loud weeping, followed by a cold in her head that kept her for nearly a month with an appearance of lately shed tears. She stood about so long on the damp earth that she was laid up for a week afterward. And this, with the expenditure for the green velvet souvenir,

cost her her week's meagre salary and made her go hungrier than usual. She had also purchased for the occasion a black hat and gloves, which, with the faded alpaca she wore on Sundays, made her mourning.

Mamert had been very kind to her, kind at a time when, the rawest and gawkiest of *ces demoiselles*, she had been the jest and scapegoat of the troop. Why? What draws two lonely and melancholy hearts to each other? What could there be in the lank, shivering, red-nosed girl, with her awkward blunders and lunging poses, to please the eye or touch the imagination of one who had danced and twisted and twirled and tossed with the best? Was his affection paternal? Was he her lover? Or did he mean, as some insisted, to make her his wife? To all the questions, to all the teasing, she remained forever dumb; only replying, when too hard pushed, that "he was good." She knew that he had found her in the gutter and had taken her out of it. Like the blind man of Scripture, she cared little if his works were of God or of the devil.

Two years later a change came over her. *Le cygne noir*, the Black Swan—as the others had called her in derision—suddenly developed a sort of beauty. Her nose grew whiter and her cheeks rosier. Her bosom filled into roundness. Her hands became more delicate. And her *deuil*—still clung to with curious tenacity—more elegant. She wore black silk; she wore jet; she pricked violets into her belt. In a word, she was launched. Always reserved, always solitary, no one knew the name of her protector;

but her changed conditions caused her friends to suppose he must be wealthy.

She never wore any color. Her appellation, therefore, stuck to her. Even now she was hardly a pretty woman. Her mouth was too large, and her eyes had a foolish, startled glance, as of one who has seen strange visions. She was tall, however, and of commanding stature. Had her dead master guessed in her the possibilities of the "distinction" that he so worshipped? Everything is comparative. The Swan was not a duchess. She did not look like one; or, at least, as one should look—it must be confessed the average duchess is disconcerting. But in her degraded *milieu* she was, through some subtle quality, infinitely superior to her environment. She might almost have passed for an honest woman.

II

YOUNG Lord Kilmaine ran down to Aix to see his mother, who was taking a conscientious cure. At least his mother told her friends he came to be near her. They breakfasted together daily in a mute tête-à-tête in the restaurant of the Beau Site, after which my lady returned to her *douches* and young Lord Kilmaine went to the Cercle. He usually arrived there about half-past two o'clock. He played rather recklessly at baccarat for an hour, chatted with such of his English friends as he encountered, and then started for Viviers. He sat bolt upright on the back seat of the cab, a cigar between his teeth, generally reading a newspaper. He invariably walked home at dusk.

The first time the Swan ever saw him he was lounging in the Casino lobby, reading the daily bulletins of the Dreyfus sensation. She, at his elbow, was doing the same thing. He jostled her, touched his hat and said, "Beg pardon." She examined him with interest. He had gray eyes, a fresh, red mouth, an agreeable, winsome smile, a frank person-

ality. He was tall, and albeit somewhat angular, well proportioned. He dressed with careless ease. He generally looked nicer than anyone else, at least so the Swan grew to think. She had come down with two friends of her own sex to "do" the season. It was "doing" her. She had not found what she expected. She was alone; so hard up that she grew old with it; so bored that it made her cry. When she glanced at Lord Kilmaine she felt the vague thrill a chance encounter sometimes awakens; the odd sensation, half of pleasure, half of pain, that the approach of some person we hardly know occasionally gives to us. She was still too young to have drained to the dregs the cup of lassitude, even of her hideous life. She had imagination. It grew apace the more her illusions on men and things crumbled. Our dreams must sometimes console for reality; for awakening to the fact that our largest actions are really of little service; that our sacrifices are generally futile, and practically might better have been left unmade, unless, indeed, they serve to build up character.

The Swan's first step on the downward road that is called pleasant, but that she had found extremely disagreeable, had been taken with a view to sending her young sister, who was ill, to the country. The child was sent, and died there. And it is sad to reflect that character was not built up! The doctrine of the *laissez faire* in its sublime egoism has sometimes these dangerous encouragements.

Now, being idle, she began to look at Lord Kilmaine, to think of him, to watch for him with persistent obsession. She managed now and again, going home in the moonlight, to throw a "*bon soir*" to him. "*Bon soir*," he would answer, stiffly, passing on. She determined at last to force the note a little. She engaged him in conversation one night in the gardens, where fireworks were being let off. He replied to her sallies civilly, as if she had been one of his own

class, but with no effort at gallantry. This piqued and charmed her, accustomed as she was to the brutalities of men. "Can it be possible he takes me for a lady?" she thought to herself. She did, in fact, in her simple serge gown, with a fluff of black tulle under her chin and her large hat plumed with its sombre feathers, look refined, even ladylike, near—her kind. He knew perfectly, however, what she was, but he had a decent manner with all women.

The Swan wondered why he went down to Viviers every day, and decided that the next time she met him she would ask him. Somehow she did not get up the pluck. She was close to him once at *petits chevaux* in the Villa des Fleurs, and smiled and was about to speak, when he turned away abruptly and "planted" her, as she would have expressed it, before she had the chance to address him. She had always lacked the moral force of action, while possessing rare powers of endurance; a form of weakness that prefers suffering to aggression. What an unfortunate limitation for one of her class! Friquette and Lisa, her friends, accused her of being sentimental. She had preferences—always an inconvenience. The cause of the Englishman's trips to and from Viviers at last became apparent to her; "materialized," as the western Americans say, in the form of a lovely woman. This lady suddenly began to appear in a box at the Casino theatre, then at dinner with him in the Villa grounds, and even at baccarat—but this rarely. During these brief apparitions in public she was always accompanied by an elderly person, infinitely respectable, presumably a *dame de compagnie*. Wherever she went, Lord Kilmaine seemed to be. A male acquaintance of Friquette gave the information that her name was Lady Alberta Manners, that she was an orphan, had taken an old château near Viviers for the Summer, and traveled with a companion and quite a suite of maids and menservants. A smart private trap with liveried lackeys always met her in the even-

ing when she left Aix after the play or the music. It carried her back under the leafy shadows of Marlioz. Lord Kilmaine would escort her down the steps, and stand bareheaded while she said "good-night." She invariably wore white.

The Swan became so engrossed in them that she spent all her time in the gay throng, looking for their entrances and exits. She feverishly desired to know what they were to each other. Friquette's friend had met Lord Kilmaine, but not the English girl. The Swan was so absorbed that she entirely neglected a conquest she had made. The "conquest" followed her about, ogled and nudged her, said sweet things and winked wicked ones, but she hardly saw him. She was living the life of these other people. She managed to dine near them. She marked their gestures. She strained to overhear their talk. It was not eloquent. The lady was rather silent, and the conversation was generally a desultory one between Lord Kilmaine, who was monosyllabic, and the companion, who was voluble. Sometimes other people joined them; an English married couple, a stranded bachelor, a lone diplomat, or an old American widow who wore extraordinary hats, was quite unknown in her own country, was common, battered and rich, and possessed in fact every attribute that endears Americans to Europeans.

Did he love her—he who seemed so cold, so unattainable? And how could a woman so haughty, so frigid, rouse a man's love? The poor Swan understood but one kind. "I *will* know," she thought. So one day she lay in wait. She saw him coming with his swinging gait, his clean complexion, his perfect clothes, that made her "conquest" seem to her mind like the block outside of a ready-made clothing shop.

She was not literary, the Black Swan, but a soiled novel lay on a table of the cheap hotel where she and her pals dwelt, and she seized it and stepped out. She walked along the narrow path that skirts the road,

deeply poring over its pages. Just as she reached Kilmaine, with a deft movement she sent the volume out of her hand and landed it on his toe.

"Pardon," she said, eyeing him.

He stooped, picked it up, and gave it to her. Her moment had come!

"*A ça*," she said, barring the way, so that he was obliged to stop before her. "*A ça*—do you never go with *les petites*—never?"

"*Jamais de la vie*," said Kilmaine, laughing.

"I know why you do not, I know!" she cried. "You are *amoureux fou* of the lady in white who lives at Viviers, the lady in white! You are forever on the road going to her. Say—are you? are you? Is that the reason you never go with us?"

Kilmaine made a movement.

"I must beg you to allow me to pass," he said, coldly.

She swayed to one side. He went on.

"I like you all the same. *Vous êtes gentil tout de même*. Come and see me some evening." She almost screamed the words after him, with a reckless impudence foreign to her character. She had seen the look of disgust on his face. With an unwonted sense of her own degradation, a curious pang shot through her heart. "What are they to me? What does it matter?" she thought, defiantly, as she crossed the road and sat down on a stone seat from which one could look away toward the hills and the more distant peaks of the Dent du Chat. In a few moments a man came and seated himself at the other end of the bench. She noticed that he was dressed in deep mourning, and did not look in very good health. He had a melancholy droop of the shoulders, unmistakable to such of us as are not blind to indications of suffering, to such of us as are keenly alive to the strongest of all the passions, the passion of pity. The Black Swan had known it. She had felt it for her old master, felt it so poignantly that she had never taken off those emblems of loss that gave her her name and made her a constant jest to her comrades.

The man beside her sat very quietly in his corner, gazing toward the hills.

It was afternoon. The sun cast its long beams across the meadows, dotted here and there by slender poplar trees whose dumb shadows lay on the moist turf. Amid the verdure the villas crouched, smothered in their roses and lilies. Peasants drove their ox carts with crackings of their heavy whips; beside them their women trotted on their way back from the market place, in fresh blue aprons and with cotton kerchiefs knotted about their brown, bare throats.

The Swan was impressed by the resigned misery on the face of her silent neighbor, by his pallid, thin cheeks, and his eyes that looked at the landscape as if they did not see it. He was slight of build and young, undistinguished in appearance, dressed with scrupulous neatness, but without elegance.

"You look sad, monsieur," she said to him, moved by an indefinite instinct of sympathy.

He turned to her. "I've had a good deal of trouble here."

He spoke poor French, but it was intelligible. Their eyes mingled. Her unexpected interest seemed to touch him. His eyes filled with tears.

"You are in black—you have lost someone?" she asked.

"I am in black for my baby."

"Your baby?"

"And," he added, after a moment, "for my wife—always."

"Ah!"

He got up and seated himself nearer to her.

"I brought her—my wife—here two years ago. She died almost immediately. She had some rheumatic trouble of the heart after our child's birth. In spite of all the cures and doctors we couldn't save her. The baby was very delicate. The physicians advised me to take her up into the mountains."

He pointed to where the Mont Revard pierced the blue sky with its purpling summit.

"There was a little chalet up there, deserted, that I could hire for a song."

I carried her up there. It didn't matter to me; I had given up my career. I am an American. I had just got into a dry-goods firm, in a responsible position that promised well. I had to give it up. Fortunately I had saved a little before I married, or we should have starved. I did my best to give her—my wife—every comfort. I wanted . . .” He stopped hoarsely, frowning against the sun.

“*Quelle tristesse!*”

“Well, she died, and I buried her here, and took my baby up into the hills. Such a pretty little girl you never saw—always laughing—so good. But it was no use. After eighteen months she drooped and failed. She got so thin, so thin, I could hold her on my hand! There was some organic defect of the lungs. She died last week. I am going to take them both home by a sailing vessel from Marseilles in a few days.” He cleared his throat.

A simple story, simply, undramatically told. A sudden agony of pity swept her soul.

“*O mon pauvre monsieur!*” she said, and laid her fingers on the back of his hand. He turned up his palm and clasped them a moment, with that longing of human loneliness for human comfort.

“So far from your country, too!”

“Yes.”

She offered no trite consolations. She felt the impotence that paralyzes us before the isolation of sorrow.

“And are you married?” he asked, trying to smile at her. “Have you children?”

Then, as she did not answer him: “I beg your pardon,” he said. “Have I hurt you?”

She burst into passionate tears. She rose abruptly and left him, almost running across the road into the house.

“Ho! ho!” shouted Friquette and Lisa. “Ho! ho! So you’ve got a new lover and must hold hands on the avenue, where everybody can see you! Well, he doesn’t look like a great catch. Where, my dear, did you unearth that *croquemort*, that *sire*

de la triste figure? Is he a commercial traveler in mourning for his lost samples?”

“Have done!” she said, angrily, brushing past them. And as Lisa continued to pursue and taunt her she turned and struck her a sharp blow across her powdered cheek.

“*Salé bête!*” shrieked the furious girl after her, mopping the sting with her handkerchief. “*Salé bête!* I’ll pay you for this!”

III

A STRANGE unrest possessed her—a new longing for better things. The Chinese philosopher tells us, “Look not at small advantages.” This is difficult of practice to one weighted with poverty, crippled by friendlessness, crushed by self-abasement. Thought without learning is a danger. From a night of confused thought she grew cynical and a little wild. She did not know what ailed her, but her future looked to her full of terror.

Being a courageous enough creature, less lazy than the others, she got up early with the determination to walk off her blue demons. She put on one of her plainest black serge gowns, tipped a sailor hat over her dusky mop of hair, and sallied out into the fresh morning.

She wended her way down the Avenue de Tresserve, then turned abruptly to the left, following the stream through that leafy lane which is called the Promenade des Amoureux. In little more than a half-hour she had reached the lake and the Petit Port. It was almost deserted at this early hour, for it was hardly ten o’clock. From the parapet, however, fluttered a woman’s veil. Below, a gentleman was making his arrangements with a boatman. They wished to be rowed over to the Château de Bourdeau. They would be gone two hours, breakfasting at the village inn, he explained. He desired the man should wait for them. The bargain was in progress. An Englishman,

even in love, is never indifferent to pecuniary detail. This particular Englishman had that reserve force that keeps its head. Another name for it is magnetism. He brought the Savoyard down to his own terms.

Lady Alberta Manners leaned on the rail. She leaned lightly, with a certain rigidity. She was very handsome, with fine, clear features and an air of exquisite and aristocratic virtue. Her fragrant immobility did not deign to be disturbed at the approach of the new arrival, although the Swan came boldly and looked over at the water within five feet of her. Her beauty was not of the elusive, intangible sort; it was distinct and positive. She was, as usual, all in white, with a white cloth cape on her shoulders. She had tied a white chiffon veil about her long throat, and its ends flapped in the fresh, damp breeze. She wore a straw hat with white wings. Lord Kilmaine came up and they talked together, her mass of golden hair and his bright, brown head in close proximity.

The Swan looked at them.

They saw her perfectly. He had told Lady Alberta of his adventure of the day before. What would fit people talk about if there were no unfit ones? They naturally ignored her now, as was suitable and distinguished. Was Lady Alberta flattered at his assiduities? She received them without tenderness. If there are three paths to life, as we are told by the Eastern sage—love, renunciation, worldly wisdom—it was not difficult to determine which of the three Lady Alberta would choose.

It may sound paradoxical, but there is a degree of superiority in a rival that makes jealousy inconceivable. Certainly, rivalry between the dragged Black Swan and this proud bird of purest plumage was a thought too insensate to be a moment harbored. The poor *dansuse* realized the abyss that lay between them. Her cynicism fell, and gave place to humility. Was it possible she had ever dared even to think of the man who was under this cool, compelling charm?

Had she really hoped with her forlorn wiles to allure even what was basest in him away from this strong sorcery, which she could see in his face and gesture was so binding? Had he been manacled and chained he could not more plainly have worn the marks of his servitude. Yet, when they went down the steps together, his manner was as undemonstrative as his companion's.

They got into the boat. They sat side by side and the oarsman began his work. They sat a trifle apart, like well-bred lovers who can wait. For once she had dispensed with a chaperon. Lady Alberta was not, for this reason, any the less circumspect. She was, nevertheless, enjoying herself intensely. She had the distinct taste for escapade quite compatible with a high propriety.

The boat put off, and was soon a dark spot, vague on the hazy water that the sun illumined with increasing warmth and power. Across the lake gleamed the turrets whither they were bound, with their terraced and mysterious gardens.

A step on the gravel caused the Swan to look up. It was her "conquest." He was a man of about fifty. He came and pushed close to her, and began to pay her extravagant compliments. They were couched in eloquent language, for he was a Jew and therefore an artist. The Hebrew knows the value of words, of notes, of tones, of semi-tones, of color and sound and form. To him has been revealed a world which may be his compensation for a heritage of pain.

She was intent on that far-off, moving speck. She hardly listened. By-and-bye he became more pressing. He was a fat, large-faced person; his hair was abundant, dark and curly. His nose and his lips were coarse. His utterance was thick and indistinct. His hands were cushioned with flesh that half-hid his nails. He was flashily dressed, with jewels in his scarf and on his fingers. He finally succeeded in engaging her in conversation. He invited her to sup with him that night, adding: "I am

rich," as a form of incitement. Had she found any balm in his admiration, or was she only dazzled at the promise of his purse? She said, "Yes," laughing a trifle shrilly. "*Pourquoi pas?* I will come. But before, you must promise that you will take me to the opera, in a *loge* of the first tier, where the great ladies sit."

He smiled at her and said she should have the box. When he smiled she thought him horrible.

They left the lake and began to wander aimlessly back, side by side, like those other two who were now invisible, absorbed into the radiance of the Summer's day.

Then suddenly, as they sauntered along, the girl fiercely turned upon him.

"You know," she said to him, insolently, "I find you very ugly."

He was vulgar and sensual, but he was a man—a man with blood in his veins and with a man's heart. He winced.

"We don't make ourselves," he said, not without dignity. "I would have made myself handsome if I could," and his lips trembled.

She gazed at him wonderingly. And they went away down the road together and were swallowed in its dust.



SONGS OF TO-DAY

WHAT time we come to ponder o'er
The songs the gifted singers sing,
We can but say they may be poor,
Or quite too sweet for anything—
They may be like the songs of birds,
The rarest muse transcending far,
But as we cannot hear the words,
What does it matter what they are?

E. PERCY NEVILLE.



A VICTIM TO VIRTUE

HE—She is going to marry a reporter, is she not?
SHE—Yes—to reform him.

HE—What will he do for a living?



AMBIGUOUS

FLORA—I hear you are engaged to Jack Poorfellow. Is there any truth in it?

BESSIE—I'm not the girl to give myself away.

THE OLD LOVE

SO you would fain with *her* retrace
 Your steps along Love's way?
 Fare on, then, to the Holy Place—
 We rested there one day.

There is no joy we have not known—
 No heartbeat left untried.
 You two can never be alone
 Where I walked by your side.

Too often in quick-breathing thrill
 Our burning lips have met.
 Love, you may hate me if you will—
You never can forget!

AILEEN BEATH.



†
 NOT IN HIS LINE

CLUBLEIGH—Simmons called me a dilapidated old mule. What shall I do?

SNUBLEIGH—Well, don't come to me about it. I am no veterinary surgeon.



REASONABLE DOUBT

HE—Don't you think you would make me a good wife?

SHE—I haven't known you long enough to say.



PROPERLY PUNCTILIOUS

THERE'S one I know of wood and hill
 As most conventional of all;
 Just call on Echo, and he will
 Immediately return the call.

D. D.

A BRIEF WIDOWHOOD

By Laura Cleveland Gaylord

ANDREWS sat watching his young wife dress. After a month's varied knowledge of the proceeding he still found it something to consider with interest. There was such diversity in the performance, such interesting points of similarity; it was so like a sacred ceremony in one respect, so alluringly dear and familiar in another.

She was sitting on the floor now, putting on her patent-leather half-shoes. Her petticoat ended in a fluff of white lace some four or five inches above her ankles, and there was more white lace round her white shoulders. About her waist a narrow satin ribbon of pale blue ran through a piece of embroidery that contained convenient holes for the purpose. There was a bow of the same ribbon in the lace at the hollow of her shoulder. Andrews had often regarded it dreamily, as he was doing now, wondering always what its use was, unable ever to determine. That it had a use he never for a moment doubted.

Her arms, like her neck, were bare. Her knot of hair, fastened on top of her head with a single hairpin, had slipped away and now hung perkily over one ear. She was a witching sight, and Andrews, looking at her, wondered whether he was not too old for this young thing who found a refractory shoe-lace an all-sufficing cause for a frown of unthinkable severity.

There was a vast space between her twenty years and his thirty-six, and he was on the wrong side of the fence. Life had held much for him of weal and of woe. For her it had been a sort of daisy-field, a warm, green,

flower-spangled expanse, with cheerful black crickets and sprightly grasshoppers for its most fearsome terrors. She was infinitely fresh and young, he infinitely experienced and old.

Yes, he was old. His mind rested peacefully on that fact for a moment. He was old, and he was glad of it, for without just the experience, just the knowledge and the trials that had made a man of him, the freshness and lovable youngness of his sweet wife would have failed to appeal to him. Without his experience he might never have won her, might not have cared to win her, and his heart contracted suddenly at the bare past possibility of such a loss.

But then on his peaceful satisfaction with existing circumstances flashed the harrowing consideration, did she think him too old for her? Like a stab in the dark it came, and in the misery that it caused him he got up and roamed restlessly round the room, sinking into a chair finally in an abandonment of despair.

Mrs. Andrews turned quickly from the mirror, where she was doing something inexplicable but entirely satisfactory to her hair.

"Patsey!" she cried, "you are not sitting on my waist, are you? Oh, Patsey, you fool child, when shall I teach you sense? You are such a baby! Anyone with half an idea would know better than to sit down on a thing all fluffy and starchy like that. I wonder if I can make the sleeves stand out again. Why don't you grow up a bit, Patsey?"

And through the black horror of his act that pervaded his mind came glancing a gleam of light: she did

not think him old, after all. "Baby," was it she said? "Fool child?" Thirteen babies, seventeen fool children rolled into one. In sudden exuberance of spirits he caught her by the waist and pulled her down beside him on the chintz-covered lounge.

"Patsey, I must do my hair!" she cried. "We'll never get to the tea."

"Tea be hanged! We shall be there early enough. I want you to talk to me," he said.

"But we haven't time!"

"Yes, we have, lots and lots of it. Come on, charming Kittymouse, I want to ask you things."

She let him draw her head down on his shoulder, and even went so far as to slip her warm left hand into the hand that came round her waist. Her other hand was busy taking stitches in his trousers-leg with a hair-pin. Andrews's eyes were drawn to it and rested there contentedly.

"What did you want to ask me?" inquired Mrs. Andrews, when a moment or two had passed in silence.

"Don't hurry me," said Andrews. "It is very important that I should not be hurried. No one can estimate the awful consequences if I put the wrong question first. Are you comfortable? Don't you want to put your feet up?"

"No, I'm all right. Go on with your questions. What do you want to know?"

"Well, to begin with—" with much deliberation—"what size shoes do you wear?"

"Patsey, how nonsensical! If you don't want anything more than that I am going to get dressed."

"Oh, that is only the beginning. I am going to ask you the important thing now. Give me both your hands; I can't ask you without both your hands, you know. Now tip your face back so that I can see it, and—do you love me, sweetheart?"

Her eyelids fluttered and dropped and rose again before she answered. She never quite became used to the question; it always took her by surprise and made her heart beat.

"Well?"

"You know."

"Say it."

"I love you."

"Better than anyone?"

"Better than anyone."

"And you never loved anyone else?"

"Never. Did you?"

Her eyes, which had dropped again, opened suddenly. She sat up and doubled her feet under her so as to face him. He tried to pull her back.

"Sit still, Patsey, this is a committee of inquiry. Put your hands on my knee, so—I'll hold them. Now, then, confess. Did you ever love anyone else than me?"

"Never," promptly.

"What a story! Oh, me, how can you tell me such awful ones! Come, this is going to be great fun. How many were there? Tell me, Patsey."

"Tell you nothing, you small brigand. I am not going to be held up in this way."

"Yes, you are. How many?"

He stared indifferently into the opposite corner of the room.

"Pat-see!"

"Well?"

"Tell me, Patsey dear."

Such a soft voice! He looked, and was lost.

"Kiss me and I'll tell you," he said.

She knelt beside him on the lounge, and tipping his head back, gave him a kiss of wonderful softness on the mouth. He put his arms round her and looked up into her eyes.

"What did you want to know, sweetheart?"

"How many?"

"Two."

"When were they?"

"Oh, one was when I was twenty. She was four years older than I, and she said it would be good practice—to love her was a liberal education."

"Conceited!"

"Oh, no, she wasn't. It was great fun. We walked and boated and rode together, and I read poetry aloud to her, and made inane remarks about the whiteness of her hands and the brightness of her eyes. I think she

was quite fond of me in an amused sort of way."

"What happened?"

"Nothing. She went away and wrote me nice, jolly letters, and—that was all."

Mrs. Andrews looked down at him thoughtfully, holding him by the ears.

"H'm! That wasn't very amusing, was it?" after a minute.

"Yes, it was, quite. I enjoyed it very much," he declared.

"Oh, I mean for me. It didn't amuse *me* at all. Tell me more. When was the other?"

"The other?—you don't want to know, dear."

"Yes, I do. When was it?"

"It ended about a year ago."

"Only that long? Why, Patsey, you were engaged to me nearly a year ago!"

"I know, dear."

"Well, but—when did it begin?"

"Nearly three years before that."

"So long? You loved someone else—nearly three years, Patsey?"

His arms about her tightened, but he said nothing. He was afraid to speak, afraid of saying the wrong thing. He was sorry he had told her. He could see that it hurt her, and she might not understand. And yet—to her it had to be the truth.

"Why didn't you marry her?" she said, presently. "Did she love you?"

"Yes."

"Did you ask her to marry you?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"I couldn't."

Her eyes rather than her lips questioned. He could see that she had as yet no hint of the truth, and he answered those eyes, the eyes that held his life in them, not knowing but that by answering he cut himself off from the light of them forever. She was so young, and it was so hard to tell how the revelation would affect her.

"She was married, Marjorie."

"Married! And you loved her and she loved you?"

She drew sharply away and stood before him, with all the horror of the

sin in her sinless young eyes, and he, although he held himself blameless, shrank guiltily from her estimate of him. He opened his mouth to speak, but she silenced him with a gesture.

"And I loved you and trusted you, and you let me give myself to you as if you were all that you ought to be, you, with that on your soul!"

"Sweetheart, you don't understand," he cried. "I told you you would not want to know."

"Oh, but I did want to know, and I do want to know all—all the shameful story, and then—then I'll go away, and probably never see you again," she ended with a sob. She had been so happy in this brief month, it was very hard to give up her dream so soon. Yes, it was hard, very hard, to have her whole life spoiled at the outset, and by such a disgraceful affair as this!

She shuddered at the thought. A married woman, and he—her Patsey—and for three *years*! Why, he had only known her a little more than one, and that had seemed a lifetime, with its hopes and fears and final happiness. And she opened her mouth and told him the bitterness that was in her soul; told him sharply, with a fierce scorn, not pausing to choose her words, feeling only sorry that she could not find things biting enough to say.

Andrews sat under it for a time, then he went over to the mantel and stood with an elbow against it, his eyes covered with his hands. There was a look about his face that she did not understand. His lips twitched now and then.

"And what was her poor husband doing all this time that you were making love to his wife?" she demanded at length, oratorically.

"Her husband was a brute." Andrews spoke slowly, in a low tone.

"Ah, yes, that is all very well for you to say. You doubtless told each other that to make excuse. But why—?"

"I beg your pardon," said Andrews; "we never spoke on the subject."

She stared.

"Then what excuse did you have for telling her that you loved her?"

"I never told her."

"You never——"

"No. She was his wife, you know."

There was a pause.

"Then how did you know that she loved you?" asked Marjorie, slowly. "Did she just tell you out of the clear sky?"

"Why, yes, in a way."

"In a way?" impatiently. Why didn't he go on and get the disgraceful thing over? Then, when it was all done and she knew the worst, she could go away and drag out the rest of her meaningless existence somewhere, anywhere, she did not care where, so that she never heard his name again.

"Her husband was very bad that night. He had never given way when I was around before, but this time he simply let everything slide. He was hectoring, domineering, everything a bully can be. He contradicted his wife flatly and insulted me as openly as he dared."

"What did she do?"

"Nothing; there was nothing to do. We simply kept up the conversation as well as we could between us, each of us ignoring the fact that he was a cad."

"And then——?"

"And then?—oh, yes, you mean about—there wasn't anything, really, you know, only once, when he had said something particularly vile, she looked up, and our eyes met across the room—and—that was it, you know."

"Just one look?"

"Yes."

"And you never made love to her more than that, never kissed her?"

"I never touched more than her hand."

She looked at him for a moment. There was uncertainty in her gaze. A love affair without love-making—really

"And then what happened?" she asked.

"Oh, nothing. I used to go there every little while. She liked to have me, I think. It made it easier, you know, to be treated like a lady once in a way."

She was still sitting in a judicial attitude on the edge of a chair, but Andrews, looking furtively under his hand, thought he detected signs of softening. She certainly was interested.

"Yes, I suppose it did," she said, meditatively. "And you never made love to her?" she added, more pensively still.

He did not answer. She felt suddenly ill at ease. There was something about his attitude that suggested displeasure on his part. Of course he had no right to be displeased—she was entirely in the right; anyone in her place would object, but—did he quite understand how entirely in the right she was? She stiffened slightly.

"And then what put an end to this—this affair?"

Andrews yawned and sauntered over to a chair by the window.

"She went away with her husband," he said.

"Did she want to?"

"Didn't ask her."

"It must have been rather hard on her."

"It was her duty, I suppose. She never shrank from that. There was nothing petty in her make-up."

Petty? H'm! Mrs. Andrews looked over at him uncertainly. Did he think—could it be—was there not something petty about her own attitude in the matter? Was he so very much to blame? Perhaps she was inclined to be a little too hard on him. Of course, falling in love with a married woman was not a thing to be encouraged—no, distinctly not a thing to be encouraged; still, when you came to think about it—and he never did anything but look at her and treat her politely—yes, really, she began to think she might forgive him. She would think it over. In the meantime, perhaps the best thing would be to ignore the matter.

"We'll be awfully late to that tea if we don't hurry and dress," she remarked, rising suddenly, with a cheerful air of business.

"Yes, you will be a little late, but those things go on so, you will probably find enough people to talk to."

"Aren't you going?"

She stood transfixed, brush in hand. He got up slowly.

"No, I think I'll have a smoke and go down-town for dinner."

"Why—but you *said* you would go with me."

"Oh, but that was before, you know. I don't want to intrude on you now."

"What do you mean?"

"Simply that I want to make things as easy as possible for you. Of course I can't let you go away, as you spoke of doing. You will keep the house and have someone to stay with you—it would be nice for your mother, alone as she is. And I'll find rooms somewhere in town. Hitchcock has just given up his, and I think I could get them."

He walked to the door, but stopped in the act of opening it.

"Oh—er—you will permit me to say that I regret this very deeply, more deeply, in fact, than I can say. I have been very happy this past month, and it is very hard to give it all up and go away, as I am doing, with a pain always at my heart. Of course I shall stifle it, crush it down, and I suppose in time I shall feel it less, but—it will not be easy to wear a cheerful face."

She thought he was going to say more, and he did seem to consider doing so, but his feelings apparently became too much for him, and he went out quickly and shut the door.

He went to his room. She could hear his steps as he moved round, and she listened to them in a kind of daze. Poor Patsey, with a pain at his heart! Poor Patsey! She had not thought of that. A pain at his heart! And he would try to stifle it, to crush it and to wear a cheerful face meanwhile. But it would be hard, very hard. Poor Patsey!

And it was all her fault in not appreciating him. She had been so self-absorbed that she had not seen how noble his action was in reality, to cheer that poor, lonely woman in her trials. It would be very lovely, if one had a husband who abused one, to have Patsey about to cheer one up. Of course it would, and she was glad he had done it, glad, glad, glad! And he never even kissed her! Poor woman!

She walked slowly across the room and looked at herself in the long glass. A widow, that was what she was—a widow. And she couldn't wear *crêpe*. It would be a very great relief to wear *crêpe*. She felt that she would like to swathe herself in it like a mummy, wind herself round and round and round, and pull a long piece over her face, a very heavy piece over her face.

But *she* wasn't that kind of widow, and she couldn't wear *crêpe*, and she was to go on living in this house, while Patsey went away with a pain at his heart, a pain he vainly tried to stifle.

Poor old Patsey!

What was he doing now? She bent her head to listen, but no sound came from his room. He had stopped moving round. What was he doing? Was he—was he—crying?

Andrews, lying in the long chair by the window, heard a tap on the door, a tremulous tap. He slipped his book hurriedly under some papers on the table and assumed an air of gloom.

"Come in," he said.

The door opened and Marjorie hesitated on the threshold.

"I came to say, you know, that—that I think you needn't go down-town for your rooms. It—it would be very expensive, and you might as well stay here. The house is large—and—you wouldn't be in my way—*really*."

He stood erect by his chair.

"I could not think of inconveniencing you, as I know I should do," he said. "And as for the expense, that is a matter for me to decide, so, if that is all——"

He paused politely. She was captivated, standing there in her short skirts, with her hair falling over her shoulders. She looked about fifteen. What a babe for a man to have seriously taken for his wife! He wanted awfully to laugh, but caught himself in time. She was going to say something. It seemed to take a good deal of courage.

"No—that was not quite all. I wanted to say—of course, I know it can't make any difference now—I am a widow and I suppose I shall stay so—but—I thought it was only fair to tell you that I don't think you are bad at all. You were very grand and noble, and—I wish you had kissed her!"

Andrews sat down suddenly and hid his face in his hands. She was a widow—a widow!—and she supposed she should stay so, and she wished he had kissed Helen! Oh, she was so funny!

But Marjorie, seeing him overcome and apparently weeping—what else did that quiver mean?—could endure it no longer. She must comfort him now, even if she never saw him

again, and she slipped down beside him on the floor with her arms about his head and wept briny tears on his hair.

Patsey sat up at that and gathered her in, and she never knew whether it was his tears or her own that wet her face as he kissed her warmly, indiscriminately, on any feature that happened to be nearest. She did not exactly understand why Patsey had so suddenly stopped being angry, but she carefully refrained from questions. She was in his lap with his arms round her, and there were no symptoms of heart-ache anywhere on his countenance, and she felt that no amount of enlightenment could improve matters much.

"We'll be very late for that tea," she murmured, presently. "But then you sat on my dress, and we couldn't go, anyway."

"And then it isn't etiquette for newly made widows to go to teas," said Andrews.

"You are a pig, Patsey," she said, softly. "And besides, I am not so much of a widow as I was."



TIME TO MOVE

AN old man with pains most erratic,
Said in tones that were surely emphatic:
"It's as damp as a tomb
In my small attic room,
And I know I am getting rheum-atic!"

BLANCHE ELIZABETH WADE.



EXCESSIVE JOY

"I SUPPOSE the Volunteers are glad to be coming home from the Philippines," said Mildred.
"Well, I should say!" replied her brother. "They are coming in transports."

COMEDY OF THE RUINED GENTLEMAN

By Clinton Ross

THE curtain is rung up on him in extremity. But notice the extremity—youth, some social position and clothes, and an apartment filled with trophies of school and college, of dances, of the hunt, of “knocking about.”

So you may picture Larry of a late afternoon in his twenty-seventh year, one side of the world all behind him, and another, very unpromising, looming ahead; in ruin, if you please, with the knowledge that the snug fortune his father had gained was swept away, and more, that he was a hundred thousand dollars or more in debt, for he had lent his name to certain corporations that had burned out like sputtering candles.

His career had been gay and jocund. Men and women liked him. He had known always the good things of life. And now all these were to vanish, as with a wave of the necromancer's wand. He knew the points of a woman, a horse, a yacht, and a dinner. He had studied all lightly, joyously—good humor being his trait, though rumor had it he had a temper.

Those knew it who remembered him when at New London Number Three's oar broke and he pulled for two places. They lifted him from the boat in a faint, they blessed him and made him a hero, but he, coming to, had only many expletives for the oar, its maker and its purchaser.

“What if I hadn't held out?” said he.

And the Far Westchester set remembered how one day he came on some bullies beating a small boy, and leaping off his horse, nearly killed two

of them, and got a black eye and an arrest for his trouble; for it seems the bullies were a town constable and his assistants, and the boy a thief. But Mr. Lawrence Wade's blood was up, and the constable learned better than to cuff and kick a thief whom he had but to take by the collar. Cicely saw this scene, and declared that Larry was the “right sort.” Now Larry said “pooh” when it was mentioned to him, but he liked the sound of Cicely's “right sort.”

He never did a thing half-way in those days; if it were spending money, he would spend more than you; or he would out-ride you, out-dine you, out-drink you; a fire-eater, if you please, who ought to have had the career in the army or the navy that the men of his family had known for a hundred years. But he, the last of a line, because of a mother's fond fear never had this, and if you care to hear the clash of arms and the roll of guns you will have only their echo in the course of this drama.

This was our Larry—our man of the town—who had walked arm in arm with Fortune, but to whom Fortune now merely nodded, “Who the deuce are you?”—the jade! But Larry laughed at her. Why not laugh, pray, when you are twenty-seven, and your muscles are strong? Is this world or you to be the plaything?

One circumstance clouded his mind, and that was that his mother had only twenty thousand in the world—deprivation for a gentlewoman who never had lacked her maid or her carriage. Larry had said he never would marry because there was no woman like his mother. “Having known an

angel you don't like to descend to a woman," said he. Now he smiled ruefully, thinking of the pass to which his own carelessness had brought this dear lady. To be sure, there was his great-uncle, John Anson, so rich that you couldn't count his millions, a rusty old fellow to whom a penny of personal expenditure was greater than a hundred dollars to Larry, rich or penniless. For Larry's nature was a fixed quantity, and penniless, he would still remain your prodigal. As for John Anson, his millions would go to endow a hospital, or a college, or a foreign mission already rich beyond its needs. To him twenty thousand seemed great wealth for a widow. As for Larry, imagine how much sympathy there could be between your skinflint and your prodigal. The uncle would have never a demand from Larry.

Having gone over these doleful matters Larry began to whistle a merry strain, remembered that he was bid to the Danverses', and put on his evening clothes.

"Smith," he said to his servant, throwing down some bills—ah, those precious last bills—"here's a month's pay—leave out the warning. I am ruined."

Smith had been discharged several times before, and every time reinstated. He took the present dismissal philosophically.

"Very well, sir." And then, for his impudence was privileged, "I don't take it seriously, sir."

"Confound you! what do you mean?"

"I will stay on, sir."

"The dickens you will!" said Larry.

Smith seemed to think he was remorseful over paper, or the turn of a stock, or the failure of a horse—matters that had previously led to Smith's discharge. Larry laughed at himself.

"On my word, Smith, I am in earnest this time. I like you; you have been with me—"

"Since you left college, sir. Been discharged for a week at a time three times in that period," he added, with

a twinkle in his eye, and then it faded as he saw something serious on Larry's face.

"You are all right, Smith. But I am in earnest this time. You've got to go. I really am ruined."

"Why, now, sir, no matter about the pay—say for a year. I have a bit put away, you know, Mr. Lawrence, in the savings."

An unwonted tear caught in Larry's eye. He held it back in some rage at himself. And then he was wringing Smith's hand.

"You are a good fellow, Smith," he said, huskily, "and I will make Pembroke take you. No, not a word. I am in earnest, Smith."

As Smith went out Larry fumbled with his tie. "Confound him! he upset me," he said. "Confound him!" And at the moment his bulldog Pete rubbed against his legs. "I'll be hanged, Pete, if I let you go!" And he was his merry self again.

He dined at the club that night, and as his dinner was announced he noticed little Everett.

"Come and take a bite with me, Tommy," said he.

Everett said he would, for he rarely saw Larry in these days, though once they had been classmates. Tommy had come to town as a reporter, and had worked up until he was now managing editor of an evening paper.

"Tommy," said Larry, after the oysters, "I wanted to talk with you. You have been remarkably successful."

"Thanks," said Tommy, "but it's a grind."

"Oh, but you have fun out of it."

"It has its human and its brute sides," quoth Tommy.

"So has all the world," said Larry.

"The fact is, I am broke, Tommy."

"Broke!" said Tommy.

"Yes; got to go to work."

"Don't see what you can do," said Tommy.

"I can be a reporter with your help," said the diplomat.

"Most fellows think they can be that."

"Oh, I say, don't give me that," Larry retorted. "Now there's Hollis. When he went broke he became a dramatic critic, and a pretty good one, they tell me."

"Oh, but he was the best amateur in the town," Tommy expostulated.

"Of course. I don't mean that I am good for much, but I tell you—and you won't deny it—that I know as much about horses and the track and football and rowing as any fellow hereabouts."

"Well, you ought to, Larry. Your fame is still that of a demi-god among us old fellows—and some freshmen," he added, lest he make Larry vain, as if that were possible.

"Well, now, I want you to get me a chance as athletic reporter, or something of that sort. How much would the pay be?" he added.

"Fifteen a week as a starter."

"Gad! that's what I paid Smith, with about ten in tips. But Smith is a pretty good man. This dinner is costing me a little over five, with the sauterne—not counting the cordials and cigars. Say two-and-a-half dinners a week."

"Leaving out coffee and eggs in the morning," Tommy commented.

"Oh, hang you, Tommy," said Larry, "don't you see I am in earnest? I am broke. I have to give up everything. It's either that job on the newspaper, an enlistment in the regular army, or ranching. I couldn't earn ten a week in an office."

"No, I don't think you could," said Tommy. "Yet you have the ordinary—rather more than the ordinary—share of brains. But you are not in earnest?" For something in his manner led Tommy to believe that he might be.

"I think I might manage men. I ought to have gone into the army. But my mother wouldn't have that. And you know almost any blessed fool thinks he can do what he's not allowed to try."

"Yes," said Tommy, with small encouragement.

"But, Tommy, I'm in earnest," he said again, leaning forward.

Instantly Tommy's face changed. "Why, Larry!" he said, in consternation.

"Oh, I don't mind it so much except for my mother."

"Is it very bad?"

"I give up everything—and those fellows—" he waved his arm around at a vision of snarling creditors—"and those fellows snap it up, and will not be full, and will want me besides. But I can't help them now."

"I am sorry—sorry, old man."

"Oh, you needn't tell me that, Tommy. I know your calibre of old."

"And," Tommy went on, "you know Old Blake and Jim Fielding and I live together. The flat costs us fifteen a month apiece—then we have a man who is general valet. Now there's room for another bed, and you really would put us under obligation, because you would be lessening the expense all around. Only you know we are rather a quiet, plain lot after what you have been accustomed to."

"Tommy," cried Larry, bringing his hand down emphatically, to the consternation of the staid waiter, "you are the best old duffer on earth, and it's just the thing—that is, if the other fellows agree."

"Oh, they are all your friends, Larry."

"And," said Larry, "the other thing?"

"Oh, we are trying new men all the time. I can fix it so you can have a try."

"My dear Tommy," said Larry, "I must get to the crush at the Danverses', and I have some letters to write first—'Mr. Lawrence Wade regrets,' etc. Mr. Lawrence Wade—between the lines, you know—isn't going to appear very often. This may be his last appearance. But, Tommy, you are a regular life-buoy. This is my last dinner—fifty-cent *table d'hôtes*, with essence of logwood thrown in, after this."

As Tommy told this conversation to Old Blake and Fielding they were mightily sorry, and laughed over

Larry, and said they would be glad to have him with them, but they failed to see how he was to make a go of it.

Larry in the meanwhile was making his way in a hansom to the Danverses', and he was going because he wished to see Cicely Danvers. He was not in love with Cicely, or she with him—far from it; but they had been comrades since he could remember, and he wanted to tell her all about everything.

Cicely, you of course know, was one of the great heiresses of New York, and she was protected by a very dragon of a mamma, who had scaled the social heights by aid of that good staff—ostentation. Her husband, a timid little man socially—the bravest lion financially—had died on the pinnacle of fortune. There you are; you have the story of the Danverses. Given a presentable and clever lady with some good old blood of a forgotten family; add to her an only daughter, as lovely as you can imagine—who rode and flirted equally well—with a dowry of some millions. Larry always said that Cicely was the best groomed and the most talented, to say nothing of the best-looking, girl in New York. Larry himself had as lief have a farthing as a million, so long as it could buy all he wanted, and his verdict on Cicely came from their acquaintance through boyhood and girlhood.

The town was all there that night, and Larry was not able to find Cicely alone. At last he succeeded in getting her from Senator Elden.

"What right has a man, sixty-five if he is a day, to monopolize you, Cicely? Why doesn't he get out of the way?"

"The talk of a distinguished man like that is more entertaining than some prattle I occasionally hear," said Cicely.

"Don't mention it," Larry commented.

"He is of a very distinguished family. He has been Minister to England, United States Senator, and——"

"And he buried his wife twenty

years ago, and he has a grown daughter—I grant him an experienced old bird," said Larry. "Then there's another fellow, Turnhill Sutton, who is always chasing around after you."

"He is very charming," said Cicely, "and the best cotillion leader I ever knew."

"Oh, yes, of course, and a 'little brother of the rich.' But so am I, for that matter," he continued, remembering. "Now the women all like him—they're queer, as Adam first remarked—and they don't see what every decent man sees, the hallmark of the cad."

"I like the way you speak of my friends," said Cicely, with spirit.

"Oh, if you want to make a friend of him, of course I'm still polite enough to say he's all right. But wait—wait——"

For some reason Cicely averted her face.

"By the way, Cicely, I wanted to tell you that I have lost every penny I had, and some I didn't have."

"What do you mean?"

"It's no riddle, but a plain statement of fact."

"How awful!" said Cicely. "What are you going to do?"

"Going to become a reporter."

"Oh, Larry, of all things!"

"I am not going to write society notes," Larry observed.

"Oh, you poor Larry!" Cicely said again.

"Oh, don't mind. It's good of you, though. I am not altogether feazed by it."

Cicely was looking into Larry's eyes now very earnestly, almost sadly. In some way her hand pressed his.

"We will talk about it to-morrow, before the run at Far Westchester."

"Oh, I can't keep that up. I have sent off my resignation to a half-dozen clubs."

"Oh, Larry, Larry," said Cicely.

What more she might have said then may never be known, for a tall and very fair person interrupted them.

"You know, Miss Danvers, I can't allow Mr. Wade to monopolize our waltz."

"Oh, Sutton, you are always in the way," said Larry, with much truth behind a jesting tone.

Cicely herself looked disturbed, not pleased, but as she walked away she turned an earnest, laughing face to Sutton.

"Such is the way of women," said Larry. "They go their way and I go mine."

He was interrupted by a little Englishman, the Earl of Marland.

"Fine-looking girl, Miss Danvers, eh, Wade? I never can get over your women, or your high buildings, or your big fortunes—and your reporters. Why, 'pon my soul, a whole army of them lay in wait for me as I came in the other day and snapped me. But, you know, they took my man Grimmins for me. They had his picture over my name. Beastly rum lot, reporters."

"Oh, you know, I'm one," said Larry.

Lord Marland's glass dropped from his eye.

"'Pon my soul! But you know, I've known some very good chaps on newspapers."

As Larry said good-night to Mrs. Danvers that great lady said: "Oh, I'm so glad to have had you here, Larry."

Bundle together all the dowagers you ever knew, think of the consummate, the perfect dowager, and you have Mrs. Danvers, a woman of mighty will, of tact, of the sense that exactly gauges your social desirability.

"To-morrow, when she knows, it will be 'Mr. Wade,'" Larry reflected, without chagrin.

Outside he was about to hail a cab, but with a chuckle he remembered.

"Farewell, *vanitas vanitatum!*" he said, waving his hand back to the house of the Danverses. "And now the future has begun. I must decide between a cab and a rarebit and beer."

Characteristically he decided on the rarebit and beer; and he slept soundly afterward.

II

DOWN Larry has fallen out of the social firmament, and Ned Pembroke, the best-hearted fellow in the world, carries his I. O. U. for five hundred. Process-servers, attorneys and actions *ad lib.* have descended on him, unavailingly. He has become housed with Old Blake, Everett and Fielding in the Dendale, on South Washington Square. He came to them with some boxes of clothes—enough for three years, he decided—and with the last of his pets, the bulldog.

Old Blake was a lawyer and Fielding an engineer. They celebrated the new arrival by a very elaborate dinner. Larry declared that he had not known so much fun in a fortnight; but their dinners really must be less expensive. This was toward the end of the dinner. As he spoke there entered a very pretty young woman with, as an escort, a man who might have been anybody. She was pretty, yes, astonishingly pretty. Old Blake went over to speak to her.

"Who's the girl?" asked Larry.

"Oh, she's Betty Thorndyke," Tommy Everett answered.

"Not enlightening," said Larry.

"Why, she's an artist, an illustrator, a newspaper woman. The man with her is Jerome, the military painter, you know. You ought to know Betty—everybody knows her in this particular world. She and Matilda Allen, a newspaper woman, keep bachelor's hall together, and they have a Saturday night once a month. You can come along to the next one if you care to."

Old Blake returned, glowing.

"Betty declares you are the handsomest man in New York, Larry," he said.

Betty's eyes turned Larry's way, and her escort's followed.

"Oh, I'm used to that," drawled Larry.

"What an insufferable prig you are!"

"Her Parthian thrusts are so direct that I wish you'd repeat my remark," said Larry. But really she was deliciously pretty.

After dinner the four went for an hour to a music hall. They chatted about men they knew, and then they went back to the Dendale, where Pete, the fifth, greeted them with uproarious fondness.

"Mighty glad Larry is with us," said Blake, as he threw off his coat.

The next morning at nine—it was an evening paper—the new reporter appeared, to be stared at curiously by the older men and to be "sized up" by the assistants, for he was to go through a preliminary training. But our Larry in this cage was as superior as you please, and nonchalantly waited his turn. His assignment, which was to interview Tug O'Brien, the middleweight, on his challenge to the famous Jack Spindle, was quite to his taste, and he felt some sympathy for a nice looking little fellow who was sent to interview a respectable merchant as to his reasons for instituting divorce proceedings against his wife.

"Oh, you'll get used to that," said the nice-looking fellow; "it's business, you know, and I'm paid for it."

"Ugh!" said Larry in disgust, yet the statement, "It's business," impressed him as he went off to see the great Tug. Tug knew Mr. Wade of old—in fact, had once given him boxing lessons, and he talked very frankly about himself, so that on the return to the office, Larry, who was rather ready with his pen, managed to make a half-column of the interview. He handed over his copy to the man at the desk, who grunted, "Very well, Wade." Then he waited. The first, second and third editions appeared, but not a word of "The Tug." Larry was sorry for "The Tug" if not for himself. He did not say a word to Everett all that day, but faithfully observed the decorum of the office, and it wasn't "Tommy" but "Mister" Everett at dinner that night—which this time was a cheap

table d'hôte in Sixth avenue. Tommy quizzed Larry.

"Oh, you wait," said the new reporter.

And the next day he had "a beat," but not in the athletic line. There happened to be much excitement just then over Montana Pacific. If Fitzgerald Walters could be made to speak! But Fitz, as he was called, detested newspapers, and while it didn't matter much, he would not open his mouth.

Larry knew Fitz of old, when he had been just Fitz, before he came into his inheritance. So he took it on himself to walk into Fitz's office and send in Lawrence Wade's card, and was admitted, before a lot of more important people.

"Hello, Larry!"

"How are you, Fitz? Busy, I suppose."

"No rest for me," said the heir of properties. "Awfully sorry to hear of your hard luck, Larry. Pembroke told me. Anything I can do?"

"Yes, you can. You see I'm a reporter."

"Not much in that," said Fitz.

"Fifteen dollars a week," said Larry.

At this Fitz laughed boisterously.

"Rich people know devilish little about money," said Larry, rather hotly. "I know how it is. I used to invite a poor devil to my house in Far Westchester and spend a hundred or so in entertaining him, when what he wanted was fifty to pay his landlord. You see you are getting it hot and heavy from me, Fitz," he added, good-humoredly.

"Now, Larry, you know you can have anything you want of me."

"Oh, I don't want a penny of your old lucre; all I want you to do—and by Jove, you've got to do it, and I don't see how it will hurt you—is to tell me about Montana Pacific."

"I will do it," said Fitz, and he did, while Larry took notes.

In the corridor outside, whom should he run against but his great-uncle, old John Anson.

"H'm!" said John Anson, pausing.

"Hear you are at the end of your rope."

"Not quite," said Larry, loftily.

"Eh? Your mother came round to see me about you."

"She did!" cried Larry, in dismay. He was very angry. Yet he knew how concerned his mother was—that poor mother who was now in a little cottage back of Tarrytown.

"I told her that I hadn't any money to throw away on——"

Larry's finger went up.

"Don't you do it! Don't you do it! A fool and his money are soon parted."

Now as John Anson was about to make this same remark Larry left that crusty and rusty possessor of riches very angry and very much aghast.

"The young whelp!" he said; "the young whelp!" Not to be able to crush other people with a sense of his power was distinctly aggravating to John Anson.

But no sooner was he in the street than Larry's anger took a turn at himself. "I forgot he was an old man."

In the office again he remembered the interview he had had with Fitz. He was not quite sure now about its worth. To whom should he refer it? For he had an impression that the man at the desk and the others were unfriendly. Then he looked over toward a woman at a desk who, as he had been told, did the Woman's Column. She looked distinctly nice. Impulsively he walked over to her, but it was rather shyly that he began.

"Miss Belden," he said, "I am Wade, a new man, and I have something here that I wish you would look over. I don't know much about this business."

With the faintest look of amusement, and yet with a charming graciousness, he thought, she took the notes. As she read she started up suddenly.

"I must show this to Mr. Everett."

"Oh, don't bother him," Larry expostulated. But Miss Belden had gone.

He sat down and looked about. The room was a great, bare place, with reporters and typesetters all jumbled together—in sharp contrast to the appointments of other papers; yet this was the editorial office of one of the most potent of American newspapers.

Everett came from the inner office and hurried about. Larry was in a brown study. "You're all right, old man; you have a 'beat.'"

"Oh, that stuff about Fitz?" said Larry; "you call that a 'beat?'"

"Yes, it is," said Everett.

"Oh, it was Miss Belden," said Larry.

"Of course she whipped it into shape," Mr. Everett—not Tommy here—acknowledged.

Larry walked up-town with Mary Belden that night, and this was the beginning of his acquaintance with a charming, self-respecting woman who did him good in certain despairful days that he was soon to have.

III

In a place on the East Side that might have been any one of several places on the Continent, our four, with Pembroke as a fifth, sat smoking after dinner, chaffing each other and discussing many things. The new reporter had won a spur, if not both his spurs. He had fitted into his new surroundings with an alacrity and ease surprising to Tommy—"Tommy" always outside the office. His story about Fitz had been followed by another, very pertinent and to the point, about Tug O'Brien. He knew about yachting and the men connected with it—had he not Pembroke to fall back on?—and his work at the early races had been satisfactory. Already he was the possessor of thirty a week, half of which went to the lady in Tarrytown. The fifteen did not go very far, but Pembroke's five hundred had not been used up, and as for clothes, for many months he could still display the glory of Solomon. Work was fun after all, Larry

had found, and the future looked easy and almost comfortable.

Pembroke, who had descended for the evening out of his circle, was enjoying the four hugely. Pembroke thought he knew all the world, from Baxter street to Cairo, skirting Murray Hill and Mayfair in the journey. Perhaps he did.

"What is the New Bohemia?" he asked Old Blake—Blake who was Old Blake when a thirteen-year-old prep at Andover, who at thirty looked eighteen.

"You find parts of it—bits of it here and there—but never all of it," said Tommy. "Square the circle and you will find it."

"It struck me that we were in a part of it the other night at Miss Thorndyke's," said Larry. "Oh, Pem, you should have been there—the prettiest and wittiest little woman you ever saw for one of the hostesses, and then a lot of fellows who live by writing things that editors don't buy, or painting things that people don't look at. And all in a tumble of talk about Art—with a big A—and Literature—with a big L—and reviling everybody who does get printed or hung. There you have it, my boy."

"Only partly, Larry," Tommy put in, "for there were some who do live, and very comfortably, too, though unknown to fame."

"I have noticed, though, Pem, that those who do things don't talk much about it. They do it just as a business, and there's no big 'A' or 'L' with them," quoth Larry.

"You're plagiarizing, my son," said Tommy; and Old Blake said he wished they'd turn off that "gas" and look about at the people—who indeed were of all sorts and kinds, good, bad and indifferent, with some "fashionables" who thought they were doing something very dreadful. Over there were some nice-looking people, and young Baller, the new celebrity whose play was the talk of the town. And there was Burding Fowler, whose stories, and he himself, were worshipped by every school girl in the land.

"Is it the New Bohemia?" asked Pem.

"No," said Tommy.

"Or was it the reception you and Larry attended that night?"

"Oh, Bohemia—new or old—must have talent and genius mixed up with poverty and the disreputable. The girl bachelors' reception was as respectable as any Mrs. Van Messer ever gave in Newport. The New Bohemia exists, but you can't find it. I say it comes to you when you're not looking."

So Pem, without more light on the subject, went back to his club—Larry's, too—where they sat up discussing many matters, Pem trying to persuade Larry to throw up things and go with him on the *Val-kyrie* to the Mediterranean. But Larry said he was working now, and declined with thanks, "as the poor girl said to the rich old suitor," he ended, "remembering the fine, peniless young man whose name was Work."

"You would starve with good humor."

"Why not?" said Larry.

But if Pem did not square that circle which reveals the New Bohemia, Larry thought he was doing something quite Bohemian when, of an Autumn afternoon, he persuaded Betty Thorndyke to wheel with him to Bronx Park.

Betty was extremely pretty, with a neat figure, and always well gowned. She had come to New York from somewhere out of the West, and had conducted her fight against the world with perfect ease and self-possession. She could draw a little. She went to Paris—heaven knows how, for her people were terribly poor—and there her independence increased. She returned to New York and showed she could draw fairly well—never well, mind you. She sold her things, not because of their merit, but because of the undeniable merit of Betty Thorndyke. She was clear-eyed, sensible, and the world owed her a living. And she walked in muddy places without soiling her skirts. She was

one of a most interesting class of women who gather in the art and literary centres. She was, if you will, a Daisy Miller who worked.

That a man like Larry should admire her she took as a matter of course, yet she was flattered that an individual whose name she had seen a score of times in the papers as that of a man about town should notice her. She saw through his honest, simple nature, and she flirted with him atrociously, with the not hidden design to trap him. Larry, who thought he knew his women rather well, accepted the challenge. Now Betty saw that he thought he knew, so she knew what to do. She took on another pose, and subtly became the helpless poor girl in a cheerless, hard old world.

And so we come to that afternoon on the wheel—that delightful afternoon when they sparred and were the least bit sentimental.

At the start they took the East Drive of the Park, and at McGowan's Pass a coach tooled by, driven by Turnbull Sutton, with Cicely Danvers on the seat by his side. Cicely saw Larry and his pretty companion, and bowed, wondering who that could be with Larry. Larry, seeing Sutton, exclaimed:

"Oh, the cad!"

"What's that?" asked Betty.

"Only that fellow on the box."

"I have seen you driving a coach when I never expected to know you," said Betty.

"Luck has turned my way," said Larry.

"Oh—ah—Mr. Wade!" cried Betty, with a blush.

Cicely and Sutton were soon forgotten in the delight of that afternoon. They crossed the river at McComb's Dam and pedaled on up to Van Cortlandt, where they loitered before the old manor house; then across to the Bronx, to stop for dinner at the Frenchman's. Both were in high glee and humor. But Betty did not forget herself. Deftly she appealed to his sympathies—poor girl that she was, with no particular protection.

She laughed merrily enough at her troubles, but left Larry an impression of their reality.

"What a jolly little girl!" thought Larry, as they parted. "Pity she is so alone!"

Betty went in and wrote home that she had been wheeling with a member of one of the best families in New York. "You have seen his name in the papers, of course—Larry Wade." Oh, vanity of woman! Beware, oh, man, when you think that vanity is spelled "heart."

As for Larry, when he returned to his apartment he found among his letters a note:

DEAR LARRY: I want you to come to Far Westchester to-morrow afternoon and thrash a man for me. I would if I could.

Yours,
CICELY.

Now Larry saw nothing so very strange in this demand. He knew Cicely. To whom should Cicely turn if not to him? So what may seem strange to you was not strange at all. Larry, in fact, would have been highly chagrined if Cicely had turned to anybody else.

IV

To know exactly what the polite world may be is a matter of birth, intuition, or taste.

I would, should you care for it, refer you to the letters of Mr. Horace Walpole, sometime Earl of Orford. I do not dare to go further and say read your Thackeray, or remember your Horace, laboriously pounded into you by your Latin instructor. But one matter about this polite world is its constant changefulness. Who may accept the dictum of the fifties about Boston or New York? How surprised—could he be aroused out of his grave—would be that gentleman who industriously and out of his conscience tried to draw the number of the polite New Yorkers! How scandalized might he be at those who since have burglarized those portals on which he would

have put a guard—a guard, too, at which an old gentlewoman would smile with well-bred poverty's detestation of the affectation of new riches.

To Mrs. Pellington Danvers there had come, at the time of which I am writing, the comfortable consciousness that she who had fought her way to the height really was there. She might have learned a lesson from others, but she did not. She was almost but not quite content. She was the mother of the most eligible young woman in New York. But that young woman was a constant worry; not only did she worry Mrs. Danvers by the way she rode after the hounds, but more, she was really indiscreet about men. She was, her mother said, as simple as a little girl, and as susceptible to flattery, and yet as complicated as any woman of the world. She could accept quite undisturbed the incense offered at the altar of her beauty and her riches, which were undeniable; indeed, she received it with apparent disdain and unconcern, and the flatteries of Mr. Turnbull Sutton were never as effective as that individual might have wished.

Larry had characterized Sutton as a "little brother of the rich," and going further, had said he was a "cad." But Sutton was not popular with Larry's friends. A man goes directly at his diagnosis of a man; a woman is apt to exaggerate certain qualities that a man may despise. Sutton was popular with the women. He had affairs by the score. In itself it was flattery to have Sutton's attentions, and Cicely, though heart-whole, was not wholly averse to them. She led Sutton on, and he went on because she was charming, spirited and rich—everything desirable. Sutton was one of those men, too, that some people find useful. He always filled in for a house party or for any occasion. He was necessary to some people. He was thought a good whip and he had other men's fours at his disposal. Cicely, however, who was a keen observer of the qualities of a whip, never quite conceded his infallibility.

The afternoon when Larry had passed them on the East Drive of the Park it was Pierre Van Brule's coach Sutton was tooling, by Van Brule's grace. Cicely was on the box seat with him, as you know. There came a little tangle that made Cicely doubtful of her self-elected hero. They had moved up through the Park and then started to cross to Riverside Drive. The cross street beyond Amsterdam avenue was torn up. And here was the test of a whip. And here it was that the leaders became tangled, and Sutton nearly tipped the coach into the ditch.

Cicely saw the trouble. She saw that fear had reached through Sutton's fingers to the leaders' mouths. She was herself the least bit afraid. She knew driving, had had lessons from the masters of the craft. She half-pitied Sutton, and then she said:

"Don't! Don't you see?"

Sutton didn't. The coach tilted ominously. Pretty Mrs. Washburn screamed. Teddy Manners was ready to jump. The grooms tried to right the plunging leaders.

"You can't do it!" said Cicely, and with an imperative gesture reached out for the reins.

Sutton looked at her in fear and awe. Her spirit dominated him.

She had the reins, and the four, as horses will, instantly felt the different hand.

Cicely never knew how she did it. She saw the grooms' approving faces. She heard Teddy Manners's cheer. And as they drew into the Drive she relinquished the reins to the chagrined Sutton.

"It was my fault," she said. "I shouldn't have done it. But you know what a woman is when excited," she said, not sparing herself.

And as she handed the reins to Sutton she was a heroine to that party, and not least to the grooms, who retailed the story to Pierre Van Brule.

But she herself was chagrined. She had, indeed, saved the coach, but she had hurt Sutton. And she was sorry for him, and treated him

in a way that he probably misinterpreted.

They had lunch at the Far Westchester Club, and afterward Sutton had her alone for a little while, and she encouraged him, and—there you are.

Under Cicely's eyes the man became a fool, and he made love to her. And Cicely's pity turned to anger. For she knew that he was at the same time making earnest love to Gertrude Warling, choosing to have two strings to his bow. Gertrude was a rich young woman.

So up started Cicely with "You are insolent, Mr. Sutton."

He tried to expostulate.

"Oh, you think I don't know, do you?" said Cicely.

And then she remembered that if she stated her facts this insufferably vain person would think her jealous. She grew red with rage at the thought, and forgetting herself, she cried: "I wish I were a man, sir, and I would give you a very good thrashing."

And this Lady Disdain stalked away, leaving the simpleton thinking exactly what she had expected he would think—that she was jealous. For in very truth Cicely had encouraged him.

Knowing the man, she grew furiously angry. How could she make him understand? To one person she could turn—as she had all her life.

So the note to Larry.

Larry appeared at Far Westchester the next afternoon. The Cedars, the Danverses' place, is a twenty minutes' walk from the station, and Larry, on this Autumn afternoon, was glad of the chance to stretch his limbs. He had resigned from the club, and his way skirted the grounds; but he looked on the Queen Anne structure without much regret. He was in the merriest mood, and he wondered what Cicely had for him to do—a thrashing of somebody, she said—and Larry chuckled to himself.

Miss Danvers was waiting. Larry thought, "What a bully-looking girl she is, anyway!"

"I knew you would come, Larry," and she laughed, and didn't know why. "How is work?" she asked.

"Oh, fairly good fun," Larry commented. "What's the scrape?"

"Turnbull Sutton."

Larry whistled.

"I told you he was a cad."

"He is."

"And what am I to do?"

"You are just to pick a quarrel with him, and knock him down, and to let him know in some way—you are clever enough to find out how, Larry—that it is for me."

"What if I get whipped?" asked Larry.

"Oh, you won't," Cicely responded, with perfect confidence.

"I hope," said Larry, "that you will begin to see that a man's opinion of a man is almost as wise as a woman's."

"Sometimes," said Cicely, airily, not prepared to concede so much.

"Now tell me about it."

And Cicely told him what she would not have told another person in the world, for he was only Larry.

The listener laughed at the coach episode, which he proceeded to term "Cicely and the stolen ribbons."

"I don't see but you've given him quite enough without calling me in," he said.

"Oh, if I were a man!" Cicely cried.

"And oh, if you were!" said Larry.

"I believe you would get into more scrapes than ever I do."

"Yes, I probably should," Cicely acknowledged. "Now tell me all about yourself. Who was that awfully pretty girl you were wheeling with in the Park yesterday?"

"She is pretty—a newspaper woman—and jolly, too."

"Larry," said Cicely, "I am really afraid that somebody will entangle you."

Larry smiled at this guardian-like remark.

"What am I, some beef and sinew, without a penny, while you, Cicely, are a pearl—let me see how I shall put it—in a diamond setting. You are liable to be stolen."

"Oh," quoth Cicely, "that sounds fairly well. But you will have to concede, if I concede to you, that I know women better than you, and I am inclined to think that two-thirds of them are cats, and designing cats——"

"But poverty leaves me safe, while you in that diamond setting of yours are likely to be snatched, you see."

"Oh, stop that chatter and go on with the story. I only say what I do for your good, Larry."

So Larry went on and told her all of it. As why shouldn't he?

"You must stay for dinner with us, Larry."

And he did. But he noticed, as he had expected, that the change in his fortune now made him "Mr. Wade" instead of "Larry" to Mrs. Danvers, who had a certain fear about Cicely and Larry.

Then they went out to look at the horses and to romp with the dogs. But Cicely did not forget her request.

"You will do that for me, Larry?" she said to her henchman.

And Larry said he would.

About a week after this Old Blake was told that he must stand by Larry in a certain matter.

"I am to have a dinner to-night at Terry's," he began.

"A dinner at Terry's!" cried Old Blake. "Have you forgotten that you are strapped?"

"Oh, it will cost me about fifty; but it's all right," said the impecunious one, loftily. "There will be Sutton and Claymore."

"Didn't know you were in with those chaps," Old Blake remarked.

"That's more the reason why I should show them a courtesy," said Larry, mysteriously.

Old Blake accepted and pondered the mystery. "You can't strangle a fellow like Larry with poverty," he said to Tommy Everett.

But the mystery was as simple as the simple complexity of Larry's nature.

He had a commission to pull Sutton's nose or to thrash him. He proposed to begin with a courtesy and to end some days after as premeditated.

But he failed to calculate on his own nature.

Sutton accepted, because he was willing to please Cicely's harmless friend, and Claymore, Sutton's intimate, because Sutton did. Larry would have had Pem there, but Pem was in England just then.

The dinner took place as properly as you please, and you would never have suspected the design of the courteous host. It was rather a serious affair, however, and at its end Old Blake, to liven the occasion, proposed to go round to Branley's, on Broadway, and there to have the coffee and cigars. They adjourned there, and Old Blake led to a private room upstairs, as they were too exclusive for the crowd. He was acting all the time under Larry's instruction, and it was Larry's pocketbook that was supplying the wherewithal, just as in Sheridan's time young gentlemen with apparently not a sovereign in the pocket could improvise coaches and elopements.

And here—it might have been the wine—the quondam host, now relieved of his duty, became obstinately quarrelsome. And his opportunity came when Sutton said something not nice to say even before friends, and though the lady was not so much as an acquaintance, Larry said Sutton was an atrocious cad, or something to that effect. And Sutton answered back in kind.

Claymore said, "Be quiet, fellows. Let it rest."

But Old Blake, who, out of his astute mind, knew all this had been prearranged, only chuckled.

And then Larry took Sutton aside.

"A word with you, Sutton."

When they were in a corner Larry said:

"Now look here, Sutton; a certain young lady—no names—wants you thrashed—thrashed!" he repeated.

"I have arranged all this for that purpose. And I am going to thrash you. I showed you a courtesy to ease my conscience. Now I am going to do the rest."

"You forget to whom you are talk-

ing," Sutton, who had lost his admirable temper, cried, and he caught Larry and shook him.

And so, though Claymore never quite understood the why and wherefore, the two grappled and fell to the floor, with Larry on top, crying:

"Now say you apologize—you know to whom."

"Let me up."

"Apologize!"

"I apologize," came a faint voice.

Larry rose and took his seat at the table, while the sadly disheveled and cursing Sutton gathered himself from the floor.

Old Blake and Claymore had tried to separate the combatants, the waiters had rushed wildly round, and now Branley himself appeared at the door.

"Gentlemen! gentlemen!"

"Oh, it's all right, Branley. Put it all in the bill, and bring it to me," said Larry, urbanely.

Branley knew Mr. Larry Wade of old, and retired, rubbing his smooth face with a large red hand. He knew Mr. Wade was out of funds—the news of failure always wins in the race of news—yet Mr. Wade once had spent money in his place, and he still had powerful friends.

Sutton, very pale and angry, was arranging his disturbed linen, while a waiter vigorously brushed him.

Larry nonchalantly smoked a cigarette.

"You—you will hear from me, Wade."

"Oh, let me; but the fashion of duels has gone out."

"From—from—my attorney."

"Humph! send him on," said Larry.

Presently Sutton and Claymore had their coats and were gone.

Old Blake winked at Larry through the smoke, and presently said, in his drawl:

"Now, Larry, I don't know what it all was about, but really it doesn't seem to me a nice thing to have done."

"It wasn't," Larry agreed, laconically. "I can't tell you what it was about, Blake, my boy, and he won't

tell—no, he's too vain to tell. But it wasn't nice of me. And I'm awfully obliged to you, Blake."

Old Blake chuckled.

"I never heard the like, Larry. To blow him off to a dinner as a preparation to drubbing him!"

"It was my way of doing it," said Larry. "It may seem a little queer."

"Your ways are past finding out," said Old Blake.

Cicely was in town next day, and in the late afternoon Larry appeared at the house on the Avenue in Pete's company. Cicely received them, glowing from a walk she had just taken. She greeted Pete as effusively as Pete did her, and said:

"Hello, Larry!"

"It's done," said her henchman.

"Oh, tell me!" she cried.

And Larry told her.

"You dear, good Larry!" she exclaimed, taking both his hands. "I could kiss you."

"Do," said Larry.

She drew back, suddenly blushing.

"Oh, I'm ridiculous, and must go now to Mrs. Van Brule's dinner for Lord Marland."

"Oh, must you?" said Larry. "I was reading this morning about 'a certain sprig of the British nobility and a well-known and very rich young woman,' et cetera."

"Isn't he funny?" said Cicely, *apropos* of the Earl, and then, without particular reason, "You dear, good Larry."

"Thanks," acknowledged Larry.

"You know we sail next Tuesday, and you will be there to see us off?"

"Why, of course."

"And Larry—" she came close to him now—"you must be very careful about that newspaper girl when I am not here to advise you—"

"And to protect me."

"You need taking care of," said Cicely. And suddenly she fell to caressing Pete.

Larry and Pete walked down the Avenue against the crowd; both were very serious. Larry had made a discovery.

"Oh, money, money," he said,

"you are a god. And now—even if she would have it!"

He paused at the joy of the thought, "even if she would have it." And then he said, "It can't be—it can't be! They'd say I married her for money, and that she threw herself away on a worthless scalawag, as I more than half believe I am. It can't be, Pete."

On Tuesday, the sailing day, Larry did not appear, nor had Cicely seen him since that call. But she found in her cabin a bunch of violets with this note:

DEAR CICELY: Look after yourself, and if you want anybody else thrashed, cable me.

LARRY.

"Poor Larry," she said, and buried her face in the violets and cried to herself.

Presently her maid came.

"This is with Lord Marland's compliments, ma'am," and extended a box of roses.

"You may have those for your cabin, Anne."

The little bunch of violets she fastened in her waist with a pearl pin that Larry had given her when a college senior.

So she walked into the deck crowd. Someone's eyes caught hers and saw the violets.

"Larry!"

"Cicely!"

"You—you—"

"Oh, well, I don't know," said Larry.

"I am very glad to see you," she observed.

"You will have to be, because I intend to stay—before your eyes."

"Oh, you goose!"

"Oh, you Cicely! I have followed through poverty, and now over the seas."

"Who?"

"You."

He poised himself on the rail.

"Of course, I am ruined."

"Oh, I know."

"But I can care for you."

"Well?"

"I am crossing with you."

"What do you mean?"

"It will happen—if you don't mind—in that little church in London—don't you know?—where people go—"

"Who go?" asked Cicely.

"You and I—if you don't mind."

"I never saw any need in your being ruined," said Cicely. By this time the ship was in the Bay.

"No, I don't leave with the pilot," said Larry. "I go to London."

SEEMS LONG, ANYHOW

AT Fate's decree I cannot smile,
But count it grievous wrong
That girls are wooed so short a while,
And wedded for so long!

JULIA DITTO YOUNG.

CONFIRMED HABIT

SHE—Mrs. La Salle is always changing husbands.

HE—Yes. She told me she was wedded to married life.

THE HERMIT OF QUASH

By Francis Dana

THE adorable Ethelyn, Mrs. Clare, reclined on abundant cushions in luxurious dejection. She had lost her doctor.

She was more inclined to wear mourning for him than she had been for the late Wellington Clare, who belonged to a mere type and could be replaced. Dr. Rawle had been unique and indispensable.

When a young lady of splendid physique and magnificent health insists on being an invalid her treatment requires skill. Dr. Rawle had known her from childhood, and kept her contented by a judicious course of sympathy and prescriptions of innocuous sweetness.

He had bequeathed her case to his partner, young Dr. Edgerly. To feel a patient's pulse five or six times during a visit and look straight into her eyes meanwhile instead of at a watch, is unprofessional, and Ethelyn would not have it.

By way of letting Dr. Edgerly down gently she asked him if he would mind having Professor Burr, the inventor of a new electrical appliance that cured all ills of man, woman or horse, in consultation.

Edgerly lost his head as he had lost his heart, told her that no such empiric should enter the house of any patient of his if he knew it, and that nothing ailed her, anyway, but imagination.

"I'm not a patient of yours any longer, Dr. Edgerly," said she, and sent forthwith for Professor Burr, a fussy little man of immense importance.

The electrical machine amused her for a week. Then said she to her Best Friend, "I can't bear it, Maude,

dear. It makes one's hair crackle when it's brushed, like a cat's on a cold day. I had to send away Thérèse for saying so, and Thérèse was everything to me. Then it gives one a sense of being electrocuted. And it's a bore. So is Professor Burr, with his plans for electrifying the future."

"Better give Joe Edgerly another go," said Maude.

"I'll not," said Ethelyn. "He's too susceptible. I won't pay three dollars a visit just to be adored!"

"Oh, I don't know. He's good to look at—and he's getting on. So are you, dear—in another sense. Time doesn't wait—and—that's to be considered, you know."

Ethelyn pinched the Skye till it yelped. "I'd as soon have the electrocutioner," she said. Maude laughed.

When Ethelyn sent for Dr. Edgerly and told him Professor Burr had done her so much good she thought she could get on without electric treatment awhile, he gave her such a lecture on the folly and wickedness of entrusting her health to unprofessional professors that she sent him away again once for all, and went in for Mental Science.

Now, next to sugar pills and "lucent syrups tinct with cinnamon," Mental Science is the best remedy in the world for a healthy person who must and will be treated.

If the loss of Dr. Rawle, the dismissal of Thérèse, the buzzing of the machine, the unparalleled rudeness of Dr. Edgerly and the strain of over-rest had not made her nervous, she might have become a shining example.

"I could put up with it," said she, "but for the absent treatments."

"Dr. Edgerly's?" said Maude. "Have him back, then. Better to be adored than pine away, you know."

"I never wish to hear Dr. Edgerly's name again."

"What *are* absent treatments?" Maude asked.

"Oh, don't you know? She—the Science woman—sits and works on you by faith from a distance. You never know it till you get the bill."

"The bill!" said Maude. "That's hardly apostolic. They never charged a cent—or whatever it was people didn't charge—in those days."

"Well, anyway I can't bear it. I never can tell when I may not be undergoing an absent treatment. It gives me the creeps. I shall tell her to stop it at once."

The state of Ethelyn's nerves was not improved when the Mental Science doctor told her the absent treatments should be continued for love's sake, in spite of her lack of faith.

In a weak moment she sent for Dr. Edgerly, and received him in great state and dignity, which his professional eye mistook for indignation.

"I trust you are ready to apologize for your rudeness, Dr. Edgerly," said she.

"I beg your pardon if I was rude to you, Ethelyn." He had been thinking of her as Ethelyn so much that he used the name unconsciously. She saw that and let it pass.

"You were. You are the only man who has ever been rude to me," said she. "I am not to be dictated to. You quite understand that, do you not?"

"'Doctor' is short for 'dictator,'" said Edgerly. "And I can only repeat, Mrs. Clare, that if you persist in employing—unprofessional advisers you'll ruin one of the most splendid constitutions I ever saw."

"That is quite enough, sir," she replied. "I shall not ask your help again."

She was in a bad humor for several days. She quarreled with her Best

Friend, whipped the Skye and confided in a Mere Acquaintance.

"I'm sure I don't know what to do," said she. "I have lost my Doctor, my Maid and my Friend. Even my dog snaps at me. I wish I could have a few words with Dr. Rawle—just once."

"So you could," said the Acquaintance, who was a Spiritualist, and spoke with a mystery of manner that charmed Ethelyn. "I will consult my Medium and let you know."

Before many days they called on the Medium, an oleaginous person in a "Mother Hubbard." She wore short ringlets and her voice was hollow, as from the tomb.

The Medium went into a trance. "There is a message," said she. "The message is for Ethelyn, from a dear old friend. He bids her be of good cheer, and he will tell her what to do, in this spot, on Thursday at 8 P.M. He says to remember the blue flamingo."

Any doubt Ethelyn might have felt as to the authenticity of this message was dispelled by the allusion to the blue flamingo—a toy bird of her childhood, so called on account of its resemblance to nothing else imaginable, and a standing joke—even beyond the grave, it appeared—between her and Dr. Rawle.

It did not occur to her at the time that old servants are observant, accessible and communicative.

She made the appointment, and saw the following mysteriously written on a slate:

Etholin; don't trust Egerly—nor no other Dr. They lack Light. Don't trust nobody only Me. I'll doctor you.
A. RAWLES, M.D.

"Good heavens!" said Ethelyn. "What stuff!"

"You see, dear Mrs. Clare," said her Mere Acquaintance, hurriedly, "a Medium is often uneducated, and the Spirit depends on the Medium. It has to write by and through the Medium. The Spirit is responsible for the spirit of the letter—the Medium for the letter of the letter."

"Well, that seems reasonable," said Ethelyn, and allowed Dr. Rawle to prescribe coca wine and plenty of strong coffee, a combination that certainly stimulated her nervous system.

For some time she gave herself up to the care of Dr. Rawle, who generously refused fees in any form, but intimated that the Medium was worthy of her hire. She also opened up a correspondence with other of the departed, held séances at her house, grew pale and hollow-eyed, and was easily startled, without mice.

One day, however, the Medium called at her house in a peculiarly inspired condition.

"Leave this house," said Ethelyn, "and tell Dr. Rawle that if he doesn't employ a more decent messenger I shall cut him here and hereafter!"

"T—'tain't me—ish—sh—spirish," the Medium pleaded. "Influensh'l shperrish 'v' a highly m'lig'n't dishp'sish'n!"

"Quite so," said Ethelyn. "Now go!" She rang the bell, and the Medium was borne out in a state between trance and frenzy.

Ethelyn cut the Mere Acquaintance and made up with Maude.

"Mother and I are going up to breathe," said Maude. "We are going to Lake Quash. Come along. It'll do you good."

Lake Quash was a quiet water secluded among woods and hills.

The place had the greatest charm a Summer resort can possess, in that hardly anybody resorted to it. The three ladies had the Quash House and its wild environment to themselves.

Late hours and much traffic with her deceased friends, together with the posthumous prescriptions of Dr. Rawle, had made Ethelyn really ill, and for several days she rested indoors.

One evening Maude came in from a walk. "What do you think I have found?" she cried.

"Wisdom, I hope. Or peace!" said Ethelyn, languidly.

"Both!" said Maude. "Incarnate! In a cave!"

"What are you talking about?" said Ethelyn.

"A hermit. A real hermit!"

"Oh, nonsense, dear! Tell me about him."

"He doesn't let you see him. That's one of his charms. The back of his cave is screened off with little pines, and he stays behind them and talks—charmingly, too."

"How odd! Is he an old man? How did you happen to find him?"

"His voice sounds old. He doesn't talk about himself."

"I'd have made him talk," said Ethelyn. "I will, when I'm well enough."

"You can't," said Maude. "I've tried."

"You!" said Ethelyn.

Her curiosity was roused. She could learn no more from Maude, and the hostess of the Quash House knew nothing. She had always supposed that a hermit was a kind of soft ginger cooky with a raisin in the middle, she said.

Ethelyn mustered strength to go with Maude to the cave. Maude refused to go until Sunday. The hermit was at home and polite, but reticent as to his own affairs. Ethelyn's attempt to draw him out ended in her telling him her woes.

"I—could help you," said he.

"How?" said Ethelyn.

"You would not believe me if I told you," said he, rather mournfully, and would say no more.

When she could persuade Maude to go again Ethelyn asked the hermit to explain.

"I am shy of offering help where I may meet with ridicule," he said. "The principle I obey is as old as creation. It has survived in a few, but has never prevailed with the many. Nations have been destroyed—untold misery has come to man—by not following it. It would have saved Eden to Adam, Israel from bondage, Xerxes from defeat and the Roman Empire from decay, brought light to the Dark Ages, prevented war and pestilence, and saved many a human being—soul and body, body and soul."

Ethelyn was fascinated. The voice in the hollow of the cave had a dreamy resonance, like water falling gently into a rocky basin. She listened to much more of the same kind, but it was the conclusion that convinced her.

"I am afraid to offer you my help, Mrs. Clare," said he, "for I could give no reasons for my advice, and I can see that you are not a person to act blindly or follow the guidance of a stranger."

"How well you understand me!" said Ethelyn, charmed. "Do you know, my friends accuse me of credulity—when every experiment I have tried has been in a spirit of critical investigation."

"I know," said the hermit. "I may not explain my principle to you as yet—and I would not have it the subject of a jest. I own I am sensitive to ridicule."

"I trust you implicitly," said Ethelyn. "Tell me."

"Listen, then. You must, first of all, get into close communion with—Nature. I do not personify; it is enough to say 'Nature.' But Nature is to be treated as a Being, not carelessly approached, but with reverence. You must withdraw yourself from distracting influences. Nature is most approachable in the early morning and in high and lonely places. Every pleasant morning, an hour after sunrise, betake yourself half a mile at least from any human habitation. That is easy here. A hill-top where you can look about you would be best for the purpose."

"There take three deep breaths of the morning air. Observe all there is of beauty round you—but take no mirror, Mrs. Clare, lest other objects lose their charm. This done, raise your hands above your head, and holding them so, bow till they nearly touch the earth, ten times toward the east, but without bending the knee. Call that folly if you will—it is an act of faith. Then go home. But do not go out fasting."

"At evening seek some secluded place and bow toward the setting sun

ten times, not in the same way, but bending the knee as low as you may and rising slowly upright after every reverence."

"Three times during the week row yourself to the island in the lake, and standing on the rock in the centre take five deep breaths. Do these things—or not. What is it to me, except that I would do you good?"

"At the week's end—not before—return here if you will, and if you have followed my advice I will tell you more and disclose to you the principle I obey and humbly advocate. Good-bye."

Ethelyn was thoughtful on the way home.

"How absurd, isn't it?" she said, experimentally, to Maude.

"Not nearly as absurd as some of the things you've done," said Maude.

"I've a mind to try it," said Ethelyn. "You see, if I don't he won't tell about his principle."

"I'll do it with you," said Maude. "All right, but I don't half like it," said Ethelyn.

She obeyed the hermit with a charmingly guilty sense of Idolatry and the Black Art.

Her complexion came back in all its loveliness, her nerves were at ease, she slept like a child and ate like a prize fighter.

"I have done as you told me," she said to the hermit. "Now will you tell me the rest? What is the principle?"

"Horse sense!" said the hermit, coming through the screen of pines and standing tall, broad, ruddy and smiling before her. "Mrs. Clare, see what fresh air and exercise have done for you in a week. Keep it up!"

"Joe—Dr. Edgerly! I'll never speak to you again—or you either, Maude Comynges! Hermit! Principle! Oh—you!"

And though there were times in their after life when Edgerly almost wished she would remember that vow, so far as it concerned him, for a few moments, they were and are as happy a pair as one could wish to see; and the shade of Dr. Rawle had peace.

TWO CONVINCING CONVERSATIONS

By Leslie L. Gilbert

"MAY I come up to-morrow morning about eleven?"

Mrs. Williams smiled in compliment to my anxious manner.

"You are sure you haven't anything else to do?" she replied, in Yankee fashion.

"Oh, yes, several things," I answered, warily.

"Well, then, you can come," she consented, sweetly; and I thought her soft, dark-brown eyes the most beautiful in the world.

So it was that eleven o'clock found me—J. Stanley Newell, Attorney and Counselor at Law—at ease on a rustic bench under the wide-spreading veranda of Mrs. Williams's home. She had continued living there after Colonel Williams's death, four years before, with a maiden aunt as companion. She was now seated in a low rocker.

"You won't mind my continuing my work, will you, Mr. Newell?" and she looked up with a pretty question mark in her face.

I glanced at the dainty centre-piece she was embroidering.

"The light-blue and pink *are* rather becoming," I suggested, with seeming irrelevance. But she took no heed.

"Of course, Mr. Newell, if instead of working I should devote myself entirely to you I could be much more agreeable and fascinating——"

"Heaven forbid!" I interrupted, with some fervor.

"—but I am so anxious to finish this by Thursday—" with a slight frown—"that I know you will pardon me."

"Pray continue, Mrs. Williams.

Any plan tending to minimize the dangers of your fascinations will be welcomed by me. Really," I added, as her face began to dimple, "that embroidery may prove my salvation yet."

"What nonsense, Mr. Newell! I suppose your life is hanging virtually by a thread. Do you recall Holmes's funny story that created such havoc with the risibilities and buttons of the boy that read it? So

"I never dare to write
As funny as I can.

"I am much tempted to try the experiment on you. You have virtually promised to be thoroughly fascinated if I put down my work;" and as she dropped the embroidery she clasped her hands loosely in her lap and gazed at me through half-closed lids, as if viewing me through a properly fascinating perspective.

"Don't, I beg of you, Mrs. Williams," as I reached for my hat. "It is too serious for joke and too dangerous for experiment."

"Well, then, I won't, but—" and here she carefully bent over her work once more—"don't you think you should have something to do also?"

I smiled in ready acquiescence.

"Yes, I suppose I should. I'm getting to be a terribly fascinating fellow, and in an unguarded moment am liable almost any day to be wooed and won by some enterprising young woman. In fact, all three of the girls I proposed to this month, instead of declining me outright—as they usually do—put me on their probate list."

"Reprobate list, you mean," she

said, severely. "Do you men generally address three girls a month?"

"Sometimes only two, or—" apologetically—"the same one twice, to keep up the average. It is a custom perhaps somewhat local to our family, but a courtesy due the sex, I think."

"Chivalry, thy name is Newell! Your courtesy should be rewarded."

"It has its compensations," said I, lightly. "Having been refused by so many, no one woman now dare accept me."

"Two might, I suppose. In fact," slowly, "I believe it would take two women to convince you that you really desired to marry one. Then, too, the responsibility would be divided, and it could be so pleasantly announced:

"The engagement of
MR. J. STANLEY NEWELL
to

MISS VIRGINIA JONES
and

MISS MABEL SMITH
is hereby announced.

Philadelphia and Pineville papers
please copy."

Mrs. Williams looked very demure as she smoothed out her work.

"Where did *you* ever hear of Virginia Jones and Mabel Smith?" I asked, with surprise and interest. "Miss Jones isn't living in Philadelphia now, and I haven't heard from Mabel in years." I sighed. It was the least I could do.

Mrs. Williams laid down her work, and her face expressed real surprise.

"Why, I never *heard* their names before myself. I simply made them up for the occasion."

I shook my head doubtfully.

"I am sorry, really sorry, you have brought up the matter after so long a time," I said, becoming serious. "You see, I wasn't really to blame. They were very charming girls—especially Mabel—" and I sighed again—"but I couldn't marry both of them, and so, so— But why have you taken the trouble to go into this

old matter? I didn't know that *you* felt sufficient interest in—"

"I tell you I don't. I never heard of them before," and Mrs. Williams looked vexed. She also looked very pretty—but that was not so unusual.

"It's such a long story," I murmured, retrospectively, as I stretched out leisurely on the bench. "I should have preferred to tell you myself. People have made it much worse than it really was, and of course you have believed them. *You* never spare me."

"Four times a week gives me scant opportunity for doing so, though it is hardly fair to reproach *me* for it." Then, with a sudden change: "Aren't you afraid, coming as often as you do, that you'll become a necessity before long?"

"I've hoped so, more than once," and in spite of all I could do my voice betrayed a certain earnestness.

"You are dangerously near it, even now," she pursued, with bent head. I leaned forward expectantly. "Necessity knows no law, you know," she added, and her dimples flashed like sunlight as she noted the collapse of my legal dignity.

I hate to be made a fool of, and she knows it. I rose stiffly.

"At least I know the law of supply and demand, Mrs. Williams, and just now there appears to be no demand that I can successfully supply. I shall therefore wish you good-morning."

I think she knew that I was expecting her to stop me, for she did nothing of the kind. She simply said, in a way she has:

"What! going so soon, Mr. Newell? And you have told me nothing as yet about those two love-lorn maidens. Well," with a growing smile and a slight emphasis, "when we go driving—say Wednesday afternoon—you can tell me all about them, can't you?"

I remember taking her outstretched hand, and I also remember that she had to call me back to get my hat, but in five minutes I had forgotten even the names of the people about whom I was to tell her.

II

ALTHOUGH I had left Miss Margaret McClellan in perfect health at eleven o'clock the night before, I felt constrained to stop at her home in the morning to ascertain how she was feeling—toward me. Her "Why, good-morning, Mr. Newell!" and the raising of her arched eyebrows might have led one to think that she was surprised to see me. However, I knew better, for I had been coming precisely at that hour for the last two weeks, and she knew that I was likely to continue doing so for some weeks to come. It is simply a little way she has of being surprised when she knows one is coming, and she does it admirably.

"I merely dropped in on my way down-town to ask if I might count on the pleasure of your company at the opera to-night," and I sank into a big leathern chair with all the *sang froid* possible.

"I believe, Mr. Newell, this is the sixth time I have told you that I would be unable to go with you to-night. Your memory seems to be as short as the time between your visits," and my fair hostess threw her head back in a way that I particularly admire.

"Yes," I answered, readily, "the only time I exercise my memory is during my absences from you, and," apologetically, "as it hasn't had much practice of late, I am afraid it is rather unreliable. However, I can recall the ease and grace with which a certain young woman changes her mind at least twice each day, and as over twelve hours have elapsed since you said you could not possibly go, I thought this would be just the time to see you and arrange our party for the box."

"A stupid box-party, eh? And I suppose you will want Mrs. Williams to chaperon the party again."

"Mrs. Williams for chaperon? Why did it not occur to me before! Yes, of course I can arrange it, if you wish—that is, I suppose I can."

Although I am sure I said the last

four words very doubtfully, Margaret did not seem to be impressed by it. I am beginning to think that I am not clever at that sort of thing.

"What a rash supposition! for, of course, you said nothing about it to her when out driving yesterday, did you?"

I denied it, of course.

"Your consideration for others and your forgetfulness of self are simply beautiful to see——"

"Admitted," interrupted I, complacently.

"—but not even an X-ray could discover signs of them in this case."

I knew, now that she had the best of it, I might venture back to the ground I had almost lost, so I asked, as if by natural inference from her last remark:

"At what time, then, shall I call for you to-night?" and my ruse was successful—in part, at least.

"As early as Mrs. Williams will permit—for, of course, you are dining there to-night."

"Why, this *is* Thursday, isn't it? I am certainly thankful you jogged my memory. You know you intimated that it was failing me. And yet—" I shifted my position a little to attract her attention—"I sometimes wish it was still easier to forget—some things."

"Indeed, Mr. Newell," nonchalantly, "but dinners with widows are hardly among them!"

"No," I assented, slowly. "I would rather remember dinners, for example, and be able to forget a certain pair of deep blue eyes, whose mocking glances for the past two months have kept me in such a state of uncertainty that—" Then I was interrupted, as she has interrupted me a hundred times before, with:

"Do, Mr. Newell, kindly see who it is making such a fuss at the door! The servant, it seems, will never hear it."

I turned away with an impatient gesture, for the servant was already coming away from the door, bearing a beautiful bunch of chrysanthemums to her mistress.

Miss McClellan's face flushed as she read aloud: "For Mrs. Katherine Evarts Williams," and on the card accompanying it, "J. Stanley Newell," and her voice had a ring of peculiar earnestness in it as she said:

"The messenger boy has evidently made a mistake in the block. He has brought here the flowers you are sending Mrs. Williams. Messenger boys are as stupid sometimes as—as the people they serve."

My teeth snapped together, and then I replied, in the jolliest possible manner, for inspirations come even to the stupid:

"Well, isn't it lucky I am here to explain the matter! The boy has evidently exchanged the two cards given him, and has brought Mrs. Williams's flowers here, and—" looking steadily at her—"taken yours there! I will step out and stop the boy before he gets round the corner," and I dashed for the door precipitately. At the corner I hailed him, called for pen and ink as I stepped into the drug store and then made splendid use of the telephone for a few minutes, adding these words:

"... and I'll double the price if you get them here in ten minutes."

Telephones are certainly the invention of a peace-loving age. I went slowly back to Miss McClellan. I fancied I looked very composed, and as she said nothing to the contrary, the feeling was confirmed. However, I feared to say anything about the

opera after that last narrow escape, so I simply asked:

"At what time do you go to your lunch at the Wilderses' to-day?" and her reply told me more than it might a casual listener:

"As soon as I can get the time from some stupid social duties."

My smile was a very sickly effort, I will confess, and the conversation seemed about to suffer from a nervous chill, when in response to a ring at the door the maid appeared, bearing an enormous basket of roses—almost twice the size of the previous bunch of flowers.

On the basket was, "For Miss Margaret McClellan," while in the fragrant centre of the roses lay my innocent little card, on which was written that verse of Waller's:

Go, lovely Rose!
Tell her that wastes her time and me
That now she knows,
When I resemble her to thee,
How sweet and fair she seems to be.

I clutched my hat and gloves, knowing that it was an opportune time for retreat, and had almost reached the entry door when from the depth of roses in the library I heard a voice call, softly:

"Stanley! Stanley! can't you get here half an hour earlier to-night?"

And after a few moments I went down to settle for those blessed roses. But in those few moments I found Mrs. Williams was correct. It did take just two women to convince me that I wanted to marry one.



PLEASANT DISILLUSION

AT first the one we love the most
Seems something more than human,
But grown familiar, gone our boast—
We find she's merely woman.
Yet, when recovered from the blow,
We're much relieved to find it so.

GEORGE BIRDSEYE.

IN HIS PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY

By Margret Temple

THE gray light of a waning day lay over the doctor's office. It darkened the heavy hangings of the room and intensified the sombreness of the book-lined walls; it seemed even to trace older lines in the doctor's face as he sat in his revolving chair, his eyes turned with professional gravity to his visitor.

The little clock on the mantel shelf ticked away the precious moments that were like so much gold to the great man, but he sat calmly attentive until the silence was broken, his keen eyes studying the nervous face of the man before him.

It was not a particularly interesting face; one could see a hundred or more, perhaps, of the same type in any American city. A clean-cut, rather thin contour, narrow cheeks and nervous lips, closed in a determined line. The brown hair was beginning to thin perceptibly, and the man's age was somewhere between forty and fifty—nearer fifty, if appearances could be trusted.

He raised his eyes from the floor at last and looked straight into the doctor's face.

"It is about Mrs. Tremaine that I wish to consult you," he said, blurring out the simple sentence spasmodically.

"So I presumed," returned the physician, his words, short and almost curt, softened by a voice singularly clear and an intonation that seemed to caress each syllable as it fell from his lips.

In the days when he had been a young and struggling surgeon, almost unknown in the great city, the rare beauty of his voice had inspired confidence and prepossessed patients in his favor, almost before his keen

brain and sure hand had demonstrated his unusual ability.

"I suppose Mrs. Tremaine has talked over the case with you?" he continued, interrogatively, with a quiet air of interest.

The man fidgeted in his chair, got up, walked across the room and then returned to the desk.

"The fact is, my wife does not know I am in New York," he answered, shortly.

If the doctor felt any surprise at this statement he failed to show it. He took up a paper-cutter and balanced it between his fingers.

"I suppose you have a reason for your action?"

"A reason—yes." Tremaine settled heavily in his chair and looked thoughtfully at his boots. Their shining surface failed to inspire him with words. "You don't allow smoking in here, do you?" he inquired, tentatively.

The doctor shook his head and smiled.

"I wish I could; I should like it above all things. I am a bit of a crank that way myself, but it's not possible."

The Havana Tremaine had been fingering slipped back into his pocket.

"All right," he said, good-naturedly; "it's a bad habit at best. My wife—" He interrupted himself with an abruptness almost startling, and wheeling round in his chair faced the doctor again squarely. "There is no human being I can speak of this to," he muttered, unsteadily, "unless, perhaps, it is to you."

The doctor made a short, rather impatient motion.

"All confidences are sacred to a

physician, of course, Mr. Tremaine, but—" and his voice repelled.

"Don't stop me with 'buts!'" exclaimed the man, quickly. "I tell you, doctor, I've walked the floor at home until my brain has whirled, and the Lord knows it's generally steady enough." He clutched the arm of his chair and searched the calm face before him appealingly. "It's about my wife," he ended, abruptly, "and whatever comes, I have got to get at the root of the matter."

The physician rose, and going to the window raised the shade. "Let me understand you," he said, his face turned to the cold Winter light.

"That is it," the other returned, almost pathetically. "I want you to understand—and help me—I mean," correcting himself quickly, "I want you to help me if—if it is possible. I used to think I could square my shoulders against most of the blows dealt me by the world. I am strong and my life has been an uphill road at best—" He glanced at the doctor's tall, slightly bent figure. "I don't suppose it is an easy road for any of us," he added, deprecatingly, "and sometimes the blows are leveled at a weak spot, at a muscle that's out of training."

The doctor turned, and seating himself again at the desk, leaned his head on his hand.

"Are you alluding to—your—to Mrs. Tremaine's health?" he said, slowly.

"To that—yes—and to worse things. Doctor, I tell you it's as if the ground had been suddenly cut from under my feet. I have no poise—no equilibrium. Turn which way I will, everything is black!"

He put his hands before his eyes and repeated the last word twice in a dull, meaningless tone.

"You know, of course," said the doctor, calmly, "that Mrs. Tremaine's operation was entirely successful."

"Yes, I suppose it was successful, from a medical standpoint," the man retorted, excitedly. "You have done your work well, doctor. I—" he

held out his hand—"don't think I am not grateful for it, but that operation may cost me—oh, well, it's something worse than any physical ailment; it's something that takes the life out of me—that strikes at the very root of my home." He paused a moment and then continued, in a calmer tone: "I suppose you are used to having all sorts of confidences made to you, but I—well, I have never been the sort of man to talk much, and it's difficult——"

The doctor lifted his head.

"Perhaps, after all, Mr. Tremaine, you are paining yourself uselessly. I may be unable to assist you in this matter."

"Don't say that, doctor! If you can't, no one can." A decided Southern accent emphasized the pathos of his halting words.

"Have you time for me to tell you a little about Mrs. Tremaine's life and my own?" he added, in rather an embarrassed tone.

The physician bowed his head.

"You know, of course, that Mrs. Tremaine is a Southerner like myself. In fact, we are distantly related. Her family's plantation in Louisiana joined ours, but they lost everything in the war, and gradually died out, until, when Mrs. Tremaine was a girl of sixteen, she and her mother lived alone in the old house, and there was scarcely a stick or stone on the place——"

The doctor looked up, interested.

"Then you married Mrs. Tremaine when she was barely sixteen?" he asked, quickly.

"Yes," retorted the other, looking surprised. "I was coming to that. Her mother died suddenly in the yellow fever epidemic. Well, I had cared for the girl almost from the days when she wore sunbonnets and short petticoats. We were always together; and the difference in our ages did not seem so pronounced then, so, naturally, in the horror of that time she turned to me—and we were married. She was scarcely more than a child."

He moved restlessly and looked

out of the window, a bitter pain harassing his eyes.

"I have begun to wonder lately," he continued, with slow emphasis, "whether poverty and lowliness would not have been better than what has come; but she was so young to struggle with life—and I loved her, and thought I could make her happy; and as God hears me," he affirmed, in a low, concentrated voice, "I think she has been happy these past years—until——"

The physician moved his head, and some of the papers fell from the desk to the floor. "Until?" he asked, questioningly.

Tremaine got up and walked the length of the room, then came back and leaned his hand heavily on the desk.

"Doctor," he said, "I love my wife very dearly. She is all I have in the world, but—I can't pretend that she has cared for me in the same way—not," interrupting himself quickly, "that it is her fault. All that a woman could do she has done—but try as I will there are heights in her nature that even my love cannot help me to reach. I can no more discover the mystery of a rose's perfume by picking the petals apart than I can force my nature to meet hers. She is beyond me—that is all—just beyond me!"

In the physician's keen eyes a glimmer of pity dawned for this man who longed so passionately to strike the chords that would waken the music in a woman's heart, but whose clumsy fingers blundering on the strings evoked only mournful discords. There are many such, and their lives are not wholly sad, for they do not know; but Ralph Tremaine had not been vouchsafed the blessed unconsciousness that brings peace; he knew, and knowing, tasted the very dregs of the cup of bitterness.

"Doctor," he resumed, after a pause, "I didn't realize so much of this until she came up to New York for this operation. It was my fault, for I would trust her to none but the

best, and so, though I could not stay with her all during her convalescence, I knew she was safe with my cousin, and I was satisfied." He passed his hand wearily over his forehead, as if to smooth away the lines. "I did not realize it all at first," he repeated, "though she wrote time and again, prolonging her stay. I wanted her to enjoy her health, and I did not notice the change in her letters—the subtle change that meant so much. I thought she was not so well; that things had gone wrong—anything but the truth. Then as the days crept by it was forced upon me, and I knew even—even before I read this. It is to her old colored mammy."

He took out of a pocket-book a letter and opened it slowly. The edges were beginning to tear where it had been folded, and it was written on delicately colored paper.

"Pardon me," said the physician, drawing back, "have we any right to discuss what does not belong——?"

Tremaine's head was bent over the paper, but he lifted it somewhat haughtily.

"I hardly think an explanation is needed in this case," he retorted, quickly, "but I will give it. By a curious chance, as it seems to me now, poor Mammy lost her eyesight shortly after my wife left for the North, and I hesitated to tell Alice, knowing that the old woman was almost a mother to her, and the only thing left belonging to her own family; so when the letters came Mammy brought them to me to read to her—and this one was put into my hands with the rest." He fingered the paper mechanically.

There was silence. The doctor's face was set in an immovable mask; it was impossible to tell how much or how little he sympathized with his visitor. Perhaps pain and sorrow had become too much a part of his life to move him deeply; at any rate, he said nothing, and at last the other spoke again.

"I have been beating about the bush, I suppose," he said, slowly, "but it is a bitter thing to tell, and faltering doesn't make it easier. It is

simply this: My wife has come to feel for some other man what she could never feel for me!"

The physician turned two keen eyes on the man's pale face.

"How do you know this?"

Tremaine tapped the letter with his fingers. "She has told it herself—" His voice broke. "Poor child, she did not realize how much of her heart she was laying bare. Doctor—" he leaned forward impressively—"women tell their physician what they tell no other human being—I want to know the truth, cost what it may." He looked for a moment into the doctor's face. "She is as pure as a snowdrop," he said, unsteadily. "I would as soon believe one of God's angels guilty of an impure thought as to doubt her, and it has come to this—I have never denied her anything that I could give her, and I am not going to deny her—her happiness."

"What do you mean?" asked the physician, startled.

"Just this: If I find what I suspect is true—that she cares for another man with all her heart, as she never cared for me—I will give her her freedom. Money can do a great deal, and with the help of the law can untie the bonds that the Church has tied."

The physician looked at the man in incredulous amazement.

"I can scarcely credit what you say," he burst out at last, moved from his professional gravity.

Tremaine looked into his face. "Is it so strange that I should love her better than myself? Is there a law in heaven or on earth that should bind a young and helpless girl for life to one whom, at best, she can give only gratitude? Divorce may be all wrong, and it may be all right; wrong or right, she sha'n't be broken down in the whirlpool of misery that yawns before so many of us. I promised to shield and care for her, and I am going to do it in the face of the world."

Curiously the doctor looked down at the convulsed, passionate face before him.

"Have you no bitterness," he said at last, slowly, "for the man who has robbed you of your wife's love?"

Tremaine looked up, and in his eyes blazed anger and pride, and at last resignation; then he smiled, though his lips were white.

"He must be a better fellow than I am, or she would never have loved him."

For a moment a look of indecision passed over the physician's face, then he turned away.

"I fail to see how I can assist you in this matter, Mr. Tremaine. It seems to me you know all that is to be known—"

"I do *not* know all that is to be known," interrupted the other, vehemently. "I only surmise, and—I can never learn the truth from my wife; she will spare me at whatever cost to herself—and we shall live on with this hideous thing between us. Doctor, I want you to find out the truth for me. I must have it—I *will* have it!"

"The truth?" repeated the other, coldly. "Suppose you were not prepared to hear it?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean simply this—I might tell you something you would not care to hear."

"Do you think—?"

"I do not think; I simply suggest. Would you be prepared to hear the worst?" His musical voice had grown husky.

"You are speaking of an impossibility!"

The doctor raised his head and looked into the man's eyes. "Do not misunderstand me—I mean simply this: Would you be prepared to hear that your suspicions were correct? If the man your wife loved stood before you, could you honestly say what you have said to me? Would you have the courage? Remember, we are all human. Would you have the courage, I say, to give up everything the years would hold for you, to insure her happiness?"

Tremaine gripped the arms of his chair.

"You—speak as if you knew—as if—"

"I asked you a straightforward question. Can you answer it?"

"Are you doubting my word?"

"I am doubting nothing, but judging from my study of human nature, I realize that we are seldom ready or able to act up to our random statements, if put to the test."

Tremaine leaned forward and looked straight into the doctor's face.

"As God hears me," he answered, determinedly, "I put her happiness above everything else in the world. If you have anything to tell, tell it now. I came here to ask your assistance. Do you think," he added, coldly, "it was an idle motive that prompted me to bring my domestic troubles to an utter stranger?"

The physician walked hastily across the room, and pulling aside the curtains looked out into the Winter world. The snow was falling softly and steadily, and the window-pane was covered with a slight frost. The man's forehead touched the cold glass. Suddenly he came and stood before Tremaine. His delicate features were drawn, and the lines on his forehead seemed the salient characteristic of his face.

"Some odd freak of destiny led you to come to me, Mr. Tremaine," he said at last, his voice very low but every word clearly cut. "You have asked my aid in a situation for which, as I see it, there is no aid possible. Of all men in the world you should never have come to me. For I—I—" his voice faltered; then he went on in a still lower tone—"I think—I am—I believe Mrs. Tremaine cares for me."

"Good God!"

"You wanted the truth, and I may be a cad to tell it, but like you, I am putting her happiness first."

"Is this a test?"

"A test!" cried the other, vehemently, "of what? of your words? Why, man, would I have the time or the inclination to employ such a one?"

Tremaine stared into the doctor's face. He breathed heavily, and the

cords began to start out in his forehead. They measured each other with their eyes for a half-second, and one man turned away.

"And so it has come!" said Tremaine at length, in a choked voice. In spite of his efforts the muscles of his face twitched convulsively. "I was prepared; but—turn round, man, and let me look at you."

The last words rang tragically through the room.

And the doctor turned and faced him. "God knows why she cares!" he muttered, almost humbly, as the husband's miserable, doubting eyes searched his face and noted every detail, from the streaks of gray in the brown hair to the lines of thought and study over the wonderfully searching eyes, touched, at last, with the warmth of feeling.

"So she loves you?" Tremaine questioned, his voice coming slowly and with difficulty.

The doctor was silent.

"She loves you—and—do you—love—her?"

"Love her! Yes," flashed back the other, in a sudden, passionate outbreak, "but she has never—believe me—she has never—"

A raised hand silenced him.

"Do not attempt to defend my wife to me," said Tremaine, coldly. "There does not live on earth a man vile enough to doubt her—"

He broke off, and rising abruptly paced up and down the room. The physician's eyes followed him compassionately.

"What led you to consult—?" he began, but the words were cut off, as if a knife had severed them. A woman's light voice was speaking outside.

Both men stopped and their eyes met.

"Are there many people waiting?" asked the voice.

"Six or eight, but the doctor said if you would go in by the side door—"

"Hush—it is your wife!" He started forward, but Tremaine put out a detaining hand.

"No," he said, quickly, "let her come in."

"But——"

"I wish it."

The door leading to the hall was pushed softly open. There was a breath of cold air, a rustle of silk, a faint odor of violet, and a very charming vision framed itself in the doorway. There was silence for a minute, and then her startled eyes fixed themselves on her husband.

"Ralph!" she said, in a whisper of surprise, and her small, jeweled purse slipped to the floor.

Both men stooped to recover it, but her husband placed it in her hand.

"I came this morning," he said, smiling and pressing the fingers he held. "It was a surprise."

Her eyes traveled to the physician's set face, and she grew a little pale.

"What is it?" she asked.

Her husband's eyes were fixed on hers and his mouth was set in a determined line.

The doctor moved forward.

"Not now!" he said, in a startled tone. "Not now!"

"Yes, now!" returned Tremaine, commandingly, and he did not move his steady gaze from his wife's face.

"Alice," he said, deliberately, "I have found out something that you would never have told me—something that concerns us both very nearly, for it means your happiness."

The small, gloved hands were trembling in his, but he went on, relentlessly: "Forgive me for subjecting you to this scene, but we must look these things in the face. I think—rather, I have known for a long time—that you could not care for me in the way I do for you—no, do not speak—I understand. Do not think for a moment that I am blaming you. You gave me all that you could give, and for a time I was satisfied. But lately a new thing has come between us, a thing so strong that I don't want your small hands to grapple with it, and I am going to help you——"

"Ralph!"

"Listen, little one. I want to be your friend as well as your husband——"

The color had entirely faded from the woman's flower-like face, and she put up her hands with a pathetic motion to the furs at her throat. Her husband bent forward and deftly undid the clasp.

"I don't want this to last long, Alice, for the sake of us all. Don't think I am hard if I speak plainly. I know the secret that you have tried to hide from me, and I feel nothing but pity for you. God knows we can't control our love. If we could——"

He put his hand, with a rough gesture, to his eyes, and then, as she did not answer, went on:

"I have forced Doctor De Voe to tell me the truth," he said. "He loves you—and you—love——"

The woman started forward with a little cry.

"Don't say it—don't! It is not true!" she burst out, in a strangling voice.

"Alice!"

Two voices spoke the name.

In the physician's dark eyes there blazed an agonized question. The woman did not glance at him. She ran to her husband and thrust her two small cold hands into his.

"I have never belonged to anyone but you—I never will belong to anyone but you. How could you think—how could you dream of such an awful, hateful, deathly thing?"

The words were coming in little gasps, and she clung to him with a spasmodic strength that shook her whole body.

The man's face had gone white, but he held her hands tightly.

"Don't."

"But I *must*! Oh, Ralph, you will believe me, won't you? I may have flirted a little—just a little—you will not lay it up against me, will you? I did not mean anything." She gave a little gasp and then added, "I was only playing——"

Her husband looked at the other man's ghastly face and read the truth

of her words there. He put her hands on either side of his face.

"I was going to give you your freedom, Alice," he whispered, huskily. "I wanted you to be happy, but—" on his lifted face was a glorification of happiness—"I did not realize how hard it was until—"

He coughed two or three times and turned to where his hat and cane lay.

The woman's eyes sought the physician's and rested there; her face grew still whiter, but she said nothing, and her husband came and put her furs on her shoulders. Then he moved toward the doctor, the corners of his mouth twitching in an embarrassed way. But something in the other's face stopped him, and he turned to open the door for his wife, but she had silently left the room. He went back and held out his hand.

"I would have given her to you had things gone differently," he said, compassion softening his voice. "Don't think too hardly of her." And with another grip of the hand he was gone.

The great man stood in the centre of the room, where the light fell full on his face. A tragedy was written there.

He went slowly to his desk, and sitting down, dropped his head in his hands and gazed stolidly at the gray wall before him. The minutes came and went, and still he sat there, rigid, fighting his battle.

Outside his assistant waited for the bell warning him that the doctor would receive another patient; but it did not ring, and the minutes grew into hours, and darkness fell.

Then, in that bitter stillness, the door leading to the hall opened softly and a woman's figure was outlined for the second time in the dark framework. Her eyes struggled through the gloom and rested on the figure at the desk, bowed and silent.

With a rush she was at his side, and a little fluttering cry escaped her lips as she took his head in her arms and pressed it with a very passion of tenderness against her breast.

"Forgive me! Oh, forgive me!"

she sobbed. "It nearly killed me, but I owed my life to him. Everything I am he has made me. You understand—you *must* understand!" Then, as he did not answer, she went on, her words stumbling over one another in a tension of agony. "I soiled my lips with a lie, and I let you stand by and hear it!" She slipped to the floor and laid her bowed head on his knee. "I thought it would kill me; but it didn't—it didn't. Oh, my dear one, if you had only let me die under your knife!"

"Don't!"

"I must—oh, let me talk; it is for the last time; do you realize that? You could not stop me—if you did . . . ! Let me tell you what you have been to me, how every thought of my heart turns to you always, in the day or night. It may be wicked, but let me say it just this once!" She groped for his hand and held it against her wet cheek.

"At first," she went on, softly, "I only admired and revered and looked up to you. You were so great, and I loved your greatness. I was proud that you would let me sit here and talk while you kept all those other people waiting. It was foolish, but I could not help it."

His hand caressed her cheek compassionately, but he said nothing.

"I used to want to ask you about every tiny incident in my life, for you treated all my little troubles so seriously and so kindly. It was as if I had found something I had been looking for all my life. No wonder I loved you; you were so good, so good, so good!"

"My little one—"

"Don't call me that—I mustn't listen! And yet—say it once again—just once!"

"My child! my child!"

She broke down and sobbed bitterly.

"Will you forgive me—*can* you? You could not have loved me if I had forgotten my duty to him!"

The man stooped down and with a passion of pity and reverence wrapped his arms around the slight figure and

held it to his breast, tightly and in silence, until the little catching sobs in her voice were smothered.

There was a chime of bells as the clock struck the hour. Slowly she withdrew her arms and slipped away. Some withered violets were on the table in a silver bowl. She unpinned a great bunch from her breast, and groping her way to the inner room, where there was running water, filled the vase and carried it back

to the desk. Softly she loosened the purple cord around the fresh violets and dropped them into the water.

"It is my good-bye," she whispered. "Don't let any other woman give them to you—ever! Don't forget me—whatever comes in after years, don't forget me."

And in a stillness as absolute as if death were present the door opened and closed, and he was alone.



THE BOOK OF LOVE

I DREAMED I saw an angel in the night,
And she held forth Love's book, limned o'er with gold,
That I might read of days of chivalry,
And how men's hearts were wont to thrill of old.

Half-wondering, I turned the musty leaves,
For Love's book counts out centuries as years,
And here and there a page shone out undimmed,
And here and there the text was blurred with tears.

I read of Grief, Doubt, Silence unexplained,
Of many-featured Wrong, Distrust and Blame,
Renunciation, bitterest of all—
And yet I wandered not beyond Love's name.

At last I cried to her who held the book—
So fair and calm she stood, I see her yet:
"Why write these things within this book of Love?
Why may we not pass onward and forget?"

Her voice was tender when she answered me:
"Half-child, half-woman, earthly as thou art,
How shouldst thou dream that Love is never Love
Unless these things beat vainly on the heart?"

KATHERINE LA FARGE NORTON.



AN AUTHORITY

JOHNNIE—Say, pop.

POP—Well, my son?

JOHNNIE—What is a revenue cutter?

POP—A revenue cutter, my son, is a—well, ask your Uncle Fred. He has to pay alimony.

THE OBEDIENCE OF BING

By Agnes Louise Provost

IN the beginning of these things there were three, a man, a girl and a dog. Wherever the girl went, there was the man also; wherever the man went, the dog was at his heels.

Now men are very agreeable in their way, and the girl, being human, liked them to a degree. But man in the first person singular, eternally regarding her in the possessive case, was really quite too tiresome. And that dog! She liked dogs, nice, friendly bow-wows with worlds of doggish trustfulness in their eyes, gentlemanly collies and setters and Saint Bernards, but a *bulldog*, surly, aggressive and heavy-jawed! She did not care if he *was* registered and took first prizes, and she sniffed openly at his pedigree. The fact that he chewed up everything in the dog line that came his way, which fact his master put forward as irrefutable evidence of superiority, was in the girl's eyes sufficiently incriminating to hang them both. The dog was a nuisance; the master—well, Fred was nice to have around, but she liked variety.

"Does it ever occur to you," she suggested, unkindly, "that it is an excellent thing for one to be alone occasionally?"

"I consider that a morbid sentiment. The proper thing is for two to be alone." He settled himself a shade more comfortably on his couch of pine needles, and showed no disposition to take hints.

"I really should hate to get a surfeit of your society, Freddy," she persisted. "And after the giddy whirl of last season I need more rest."

"I am sure you have been resting

vigorously. Look at the tramps you have taken with me and Bing."

"Bing! Horrid animal! He has no manners whatever."

"You misjudge him. It's his blue blood, Cecily; it makes him arrogant at times. He is your devoted servant, like his master. You can have 'em both for the asking."

"You are very tiresome to-day, Fred. I think I should like you ever so much more if you would hunt up a few new men for me. You told my brother that half a dozen of your college friends were camping at the upper lake, and you never so much as hinted at bringing them down here. I detest selfish people."

He sat up, looking deeply aggrieved, and brushed a few stray pine needles from his hair.

"There you go on a new tack. I thought you were yearning for solitude."

"Not perpetually, goose. I need to see some new men, don't you know, in order to—h'm—to retain some slight appreciation for the old ones. Unless you wish to grow frightfully monotonous, I should advise you to go and see your college friends and suggest that the lower lake has its attractions."

He sighed resignedly.

"Right away, Princess?"

The Princess smiled on him ravishingly.

"Why, that is a delightful idea! Right away, by all means."

"And leave you here?"

"Mercy, yes! If you went home with me, Freddy, you'd be sure to stay."

"Well, I'm not the first martyr.

But if those fellows make love to you, which seems to be largely a matter of custom, I shall reluctantly be compelled to assassinate them. Good-bye, Your Highness; I leave you in Bing's care."

"Indeed you sha'n't!" Her Highness sat stiffly upright in alarm. "You take him right along with you. You don't think I am afraid to be alone, do you?"

"Now, Princess, you send me on a four-mile tramp to corral six new victims for you, and the victims have two fox terriers and a setter. If I take Bing he will simply eat those dogs; it's a way he has. Besides, a correct young lady like yourself should not be left unguarded."

The Princess scornfully tilted her nose in the air and looked from Bing to Bing's master. Was it better to suffer in silence, or to admit to Fred that she would rather die than be left alone with that hideous dog? No, indeed! she would never hear the last of it! Bing was an affliction, but, of course, he wouldn't really hurt her.

"I wouldn't own a dog that couldn't go visiting without eating every other dog on the place. He is no gentleman, or he wouldn't do such things. Go on now, and stop at our house and report on your way back."

"'No gentleman,' with that pedigree? Princess, don't show your ignorance. Good-bye. Stay there, Bing! Go back, sir! Here, I'll fix you."

He pointed a meaning finger at the girl and looked down into Bing's unprepossessing countenance.

"Watch!" he said, sternly.

As long as he was in sight Miss Farquhar sat leaning against a big tree trunk, watching him swing down the path with long strides. Then she turned to the dog.

"Oh, you ugly, sulky, suspicious wretch, to think that I must walk home with you alone, just because I wouldn't own that I was afraid. Come on, you monster, let's get it over."

She started briskly to rise.

"Gr-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r!" rumbled Bing, unmistakably.

Miss Farquhar dropped back with a startled gasp. Bing's temper was admittedly uncertain, but he had never growled at her before. And Fred had passed out of hearing!

"Be still, sir!" The royal spirit was high, and there was no lack of sternness in the command. "Stop that!"

With a splendid show of unconcern she again leaned forward to rise.

"Gr-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r! Wuff!"

Bing sat up on his haunches, and there was something appallingly determined in the movement. The girl looked at him fearfully. His wicked little pink eyes watched her with unwinking steadiness, one crop ear was raised to catch the faintest sound of movement, and irresistible brute force spoke in every line of the sullen under jaw and heavy shoulders.

Now Bing was essentially a creature of one idea, and that was to hold fast to the matter in hand. His master had told him to watch this nervous bundle of fripperies, and to watch a thing, as every dog knows, means to put your paws upon it and keep them there at any cost. Bing had his grievous faults, but indecision was not among them.

Miss Farquhar sat very still, watching the surly animal apprehensively and trying desperately to decide what to do. It was horribly quiet, with no sound but the dying murmur in the tree tops as the waning afternoon breeze rustled in the pines. If she screamed there was no one to hear her, and she dared not irritate this morose brute, whose steady eyes menaced her least movement. It was growing late, too, and under the thick pines, where the sunlight came only in slender threads, the shadows would gather quickly.

Oh, it was absurd, outrageous! She gathered her shaken nerves together in a desperate grip and turned with wrathful command to the unmoved dog.

"Go away, sir! Get out! Go home! Oh!"

"Gr-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r!"

Bing answered her sudden attempt to escape in a manner peculiarly his own. He stretched himself out quickly, so that she could see the big shoulder muscles roll and harden under the skin, lay calmly down on the end of her skirt and took the cloth firmly in his cruel teeth.

For a few moments the world swam, and Miss Farquhar blessed the tree against which she leaned. Scarcely daring to breathe, she sat with her small fingers desperately twisted together, wishing that she had died before she had met Fred or his awful dog. Oh, it was cruel of him to leave her alone like this! She hated to be alone! If only someone would come!

Under the pine trees the twilight began to close down. The last bit of courage oozed out of the royal finger tips. Her under lip trembled, a miserable, hopeless tear trickled down her cheek, and one by one more tears splashed after it.

When Fred stopped at the Farquhar cottage on his return Cecily's mother met him with startled reproach. Why, no, Cecily had not returned yet! They had thought her with him. Why had he left her alone at such an hour? The young man shriveled under the accusing fire of questions.

"Why, she sent me—that is, I had an errand to the upper lake, you know, but I left Bing to look after her. Oh, it's bound to be all right; he wouldn't let anybody come near her. I'll go hunt 'em up right now."

He was off down the path, taking tremendous strides, with her young freshman brother at his heels. As they left the cottage clearing and plunged into the dim pine woods on the margin of the lake his head jerked swiftly from side to side, watching the darkening slopes above them and the narrowing strip between the path and the lake. What if she had fallen and injured herself, with only the dog to look to her safety?

What if she had slipped from one of those lichen-covered, rocky banks, from which the water dropped to a depth of fifteen or twenty feet right off shore? Once beyond her mother's hearing he let out his voice in a long call:

"Hello-o-o-o, Cecily!"

They were making direct for the spot where he had left her, but before they reached it his shout brought an answering wail of wrath and terror.

"Oh! he won't let me move! Take him away! Take him away!"

In one awful instant the situation flashed on Fred's mind, and he said something strong and pungent under his breath. In the next moment Bing, still holding the fort, received a kick that was the surprise of his life and an abiding regret in his stomach for days to come.

"Oh, poor little Princess! what a wooden-headed dolt I am! Oh, I—I'll have him shot, Cecily! I'll give him to my cousin Billy! I'll send him to Billy by the first train tomorrow!"

Self-accusing and remorseful, he gathered her up bodily, while she gurgled something to the effect that she hated him and his horrible dog. She did hate him, and she hoped that she would never see him again, even though she would miss him dreadfully, and then, because his shoulder was only a scant three inches away, she leaned her head against it and struggled with the pent-up emotions of the past few hours.

It was a serious temptation to which to subject an unprotected young man. Fred shot a wary glance at the freshman brother, but that individual was discreetly confining his attention to Bing. Then—well, it wasn't much so far as sound went, but there was a distinct pause of several seconds before Fred turned again to the young brother.

"If you don't mind, Frank, I'll ask you to run ahead and tell your mother that we have found the lost one. You needn't bother waiting for us. I'll bring Cecily home."



THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

OH, the road lies green behind us, like a narrow, winding river—
May bloom and rose bloom and whisper o' the wind—
 Sunbeams spilled along the path like arrows from a quiver—
Nay, we must press on, sweetheart, and never look behind.
 Time is left and little time for tender words and kisses,
 A little round o' purple nights, a round o' golden days;
 Never was a gypsy as sweet a one as this is—
We are nearing now the parting of the ways.

When at first we took the road the crescent moon was slender,
 Like a folded lily-bud a-sway on curving stem;
 Night and night she spread her leaves until she flushed in splendor,
 Night and night her petals drooped the while we noted them.
 Now, before the moon is dead, let us laugh together—
 Still there lies a little way and time to kiss and praise;
 Oh, your hand lies light in mine, a little curled white feather—
We are nearing now the parting of the ways.

Oh, the glory of the days that we two have roved in,
Green wood and deep wood and low wind of the South.
 Oh, the tenderness of nights that we two have loved in—
Soft arms and warm arms, and kisses of your mouth.
 Would that there were turning back to the path's beginning,
 Back of us the tender light, all before the haze;
 Let our feet be slow, sweetheart, the goal is weary winning—
We are nearing now the parting of the ways.

THEODOSIA GARRISON.



OF HOME MANUFACTURE

"GUESS the Lord didn't make everybody," said the little wiseacre Jerome; "'cause I heard sister Jane say this morning that her friend made himself right at home."



HER OWN CIRCLE

"MRS. PUTON gave a very exclusive affair last night."
 "Yes. Her guests were known exclusively to herself—nobody else ever heard of them."

UNE ANGOISSE

Par Charles Foley

L'AN dernier, à l'automne, au moment de la fête patronale du pays, je retournai passer une semaine en Auvergne, chez Bassier, mon vieux camarade de collège. Sa propriété s'étend jusqu'à la Sioule, aucun chemin de halage ne sépare son jardin de cette rivière. Le site est un peu farouche, mais on peut y pêcher tranquillement à l'ombre des vernes et j'y revenais bien plutôt pour la pêche que pour les chevaux de bois, le bal champêtre, le tir ou les dioramas de la foire.

Dès notre déjeuner de vieux garçons, Bassier, qui n'aime pas déguster le café ni le pousse-café tout seul, me reprocha ma désertion :

"Tu ne penses qu'à ta pêche! Je n'ai même pas le temps de te parler de notre fête patronale, une surprise . . . mais tu ne m'écoutes plus! Te voilà déjà debout, piaffant d'impatience. Eh bien, file! Tant pis pour toi! Tu ne connaîtras pas ma surprise et tu ne goûteras pas ma fine champagne de '48!"

Je n'étais pas indifférent à la fine champagne de '48; mais, avant d'en arriver à '48, il fallait en passer par le marc de Solférino, le kirsch de Sébastopol et le rhum du Deux-Décembre. Bassier avait conservé un goût vif pour la chronologie, souvenir de son seul succès de collège; un accessit d'histoire. Il en était resté très fier et quelque peu pédant, parlant à tort et à travers de Jeanne d'Arc, de Marie Stuart, de Louis XIV., de Robespierre et de Napoléon. Entretemps, il se consolait de son célibat en mettant pêle-mêle, victoires, émeutes ou coups d'État, toutes les dates mémorables de notre siècle, en bouteilles!

La veille, pour lui avoir tenu tête jusqu'à Sébastopol, n'ayant plus ni l'œil ni la main sûrs, je m'étais laissé casser par une carpe d'au moins quatre livres. Ce souvenir me rendai sobre. Laissant M. le maire à ses réminiscences d'histoire et à ses apprêts de fête, je regagnai la rive. . . .

Ça ne mordait pas, quoique le temps fût assez favorable; pas de vent, pas de courant, pas d'herbes flottantes et des eaux basses, si basses que, plus haut dans la rivière, les grosses pierres de l'ancien gué repaissaient à fleur d'eau et que les bonnes gens du pays, cottes ou culottes troussées, passaient et repassaient p'une rive à l'autre—plaisir rare, car, à la moindre averse, la Sioule devient torrent.

Je n'avais encore rien pris, peut-être à cause de ce va et vient insolite sur le gué, quand, vers le crépuscule, le ciel se couvrit et le vent se leva. De rage d'être bredouille et de voir le temps changer, je tendis des lignes de fond. Je n'avais pas de permis, mais je me dis que les gendarmes ne me dresseraient pas procès-verbal dans le jardin de M. le maire. Puis, par surcroît de prudence, je me promis de ne venir relever mes lignes de fond qu'à la nuit. Tout préparé, aux premières gouttes de pluie, je remontai vers la maison.

Je me mis à table de bel appétit et, la pluie tombant de plus en plus fort, je bus et mangeai posément. Satisfait, Bassier en profita pour me raser de ses anecdotes plus ou moins historiques. Après deux petits verres de Solférino, un de Sébastopol, un autre du Deux-Décembre, Bassier, ravi de ma complaisance, me proposa :

"Te sens-tu assez crâne, ce soir? y allons-nous du '48?"

"Je me sens assez crâne, allons-y!"

Il apporta lui-même la fameuse bouteille, poussiéreuse, enveloppée de toiles d'araignée. Sans la remuer, sans commettre le sacrilège de l'essuyer, il y enfonça le tire-bouchon comme on visserait une vrille dans du bois de rose, puis souffla sur le goulot pour disperser la cire, plus délicatement qu'on ne soufflerait sur une fleur mi-close pour la faire épanouir. La bouteille débouchée, il versa goutte à goutte, puis leva le petit verre pour déguster la liqueur par l'œil et par le nez avant de l'avalier.

"Quelle couleur! Quel bouquet! Quelle saveur! Allons-y!" fit-il, joyeusement.

C'était vrai. Aussi après *y être allé*, nous *y revînmes* à trois ou quatre reprises, si bien que, vers dix heures, j'étais encore à table quand je me souvins tout à coup de mes lignes de fond. J'alléguai je ne sais quel prétexte et je gagnai la porte en vacillant; je traversai le vestibule où je pris par précaution une boîte d'allumettes suédoises et je descendis au jardin. Je n'étais pas solide sur mes jambes et toutes les dates mémorables, Solférino, Sébastopol, le Deux-Décembre et '48, dansaient devant mes yeux leurs quadrilles de bouteilles. La nuit était très noire, le vent soufflait furieusement, la pluie tombait toujours à verse et de la rivière montait un grondement sourd. Un peu dégrisé par le grand air, je pensai: "Hum! La Sioule se fâche; il y a de la crue!" Le brusque contraste de cette salle chaude, bien éclairée, avec cette berge obscure, cinglée par la rafale, me changea non moins brusquement les idées. À mesure que j'avancais, une tristesse soudaine, une angoisse peureuse m'oppressaient. Je n'eus bientôt plus devant moi, sous un ciel sinistre, que les flots tumultueux d'une rivière qui roulait en torrent dans une gorge sauvage. Je dois avouer que j'ai l'ivresse la plus légère affreusement lugubre. Il me semblait, ainsi que dans un cauchemar, être soudain

transporté très loin, tout seul, dans un lieu de désolation farouche et j'eus, dans un frisson, le pressentiment qu'il allait m'arriver quelque chose d'affreux.

Pour secouer cette impression de frayeur, je me baissai, tâtonnai dans les herbes humides et saisis une de mes lignes de fond. Alors je commençai de tirer. Il y avait quelque chose de pris, mais quelque chose de lourd, qui ne se débattait pas, mais se laissait amener vers la rive, sans secousse, en épave inerte et molle. Quand la chose toucha le bord, je me penchai, mais je ne vis qu'une masse sombre ballottée dans des remous. Je mis la main dans l'eau pour empoigner l'épave. Aussitôt j'étouffai un cri et lâchai la prise, tout grelottant de terreur. Dans des plis de vêtements trempés, des cheveux, collés en mèches gluantes, m'avaient frôlé la peau d'une mouillure visqueuse. Je reculai dans une répulsion et, toute pensée perdue dans cette sensation d'horreur, j'eus cependant l'instinct de tirer de ma poche la boîte de suédoises. Je grattai une allumette d'une main tremblante. La clarté dura peu, s'éteignit dans le vent et dans la pluie, mais j'avais eu le temps d'apercevoir, retombée dans l'eau, une femme tout habillée, dont la chevelure brune cachait à demi le visage pâle. Plus tremblant, je grattai une seconde allumette et la tins abritée dans le creux de mes mains. À sa lueur, j'entrevis sur l'eau, non plus une face blême, mais trois, quatre, cinq et six blêmes, figures de noyés. Je respirais à peine et pourtant, sous une sorte d'influence hypnotique, je me rapprochai du bord et fis reflamber deux allumettes. Cette fois, plus près, tout près, turnoyant sur les vagues, dans une hallucination d'épouvante, je reconnus le visage de Napoléon, coiffé du fameux petit chapeau. Le courant l'entraîna et Jeanne d'Arc surgit en chaperon à plumes, puis Marie Stuart avec sa ferrière, puis Robespierre en perruque, puis d'autres morts et d'autres morts encore, livides, me fixant de leurs yeux au regard morne. . . .

Je fus pris de vertige. Ma cervelle éclatait. Je crus que je devenais fou et je m'enfuis vers la maison comme si tous ces spectres se lançaient à ma poursuite.

Je franchis le perron d'un bond et tombai sur une chaise du vestibule, défaillant, glacé de peur, sans voix. Par la porte de la salle demeurée entr'ouverte, je vis Bassier, toujours à table, puis, debout devant lui, un marchand forain dont la limousine ruisselait. Et cet homme expliquait d'une voix désolée:

"Bien sûr, monsieur le maire, bien sûr, je n'aurais pas dû, mais nous

étions en retard et ça nous évitait un détour d'une bonne lieue pour aller gagner le pont. Alors j'ai risqué le coup, mais au milieu du gué les eaux étaient si hautes et le courant si fort que mon chariot a versé avec tous mes bonshommes dans la rivière!"

"Pas de chance!" s'exclama Bassier du même ton désolé. "Pour une fois que je fais venir à la fête un musée de cire, avec toutes les figures célèbres de l'histoire, non, vrai, ça n'est pas de chance!"

Je n'écoutai plus le reste. Je respirais, soulagé d'une indicible angoisse.



A DUET

I SANG a song of things that are,
A little song of truths that be,
And tiptoe on a rosy star,
Love poised and mocked at me.

"Oh, bright," sang I, "are woman's eyes—
Clear as the sun to seek and see,
With knowledge keen, with wisdom wise!"
"Until she loves," said Love to me.

"Oh, sharp," sang I, "is woman's wit
As any blade of chivalry;
Unfailing, sure, her grasp of it!"
"Until she loves," said Love to me.

"Oh, fine," I sang, "is woman's ear
To know sweet truth from falsity,
When to be deaf and when to hear!"
"Until she loves," said Love to me.

"Oh, true," I sang, "is woman's heart—
From wrong, from guile, from falsehood free;
An unflawed jewel stored apart!"
"Until she loves," said Love to me.

I sang a song of things that are,
A little song of truths that be,
And tiptoe on a rosy star,
Love poised and mocked at me.

JOHN WINWOOD.

THE DAGGER

TURQUOISE-STUDDERD and gold-inlaid,
Exquisite handle and blue-white blade,

How you glitter and gleam and shine,
Here in the moonlight, dagger mine!

Over my heart you used to lie;
Far it was in the days gone by.

Beautiful days were they, and fair;
Love and Laughter and Life were there.

Exquisite handle and keen, blue blade,
Love has wounded, and Life betrayed.

Ah, how the memories burn and blend!
You at last are my only friend.

Lovely bauble of gold and blue,
She is faithless—but you are true.

Under the virgin moon they came,
Lips a-hunger and hearts aflame.

There came I, with my soul astir,
Mad of my ravening love of her.

Beautiful thing of blue and gold,
Love is eternal; and hate is cold.

All my loving has come to this—
They shall die; and for that one kiss!

Clear her eyes as a morning star,
Blue are they as the deep seas are.

Lips that often my own have pressed,
Milk-white shoulder and dove-soft breast,

Arms that round me were wont to twine—
Kill her tenderly, knife of mine!

When yon crescent has sunk to sleep
They their pitiful tryst will keep.

Sighs the wind . . . and the moon is low . . .
Dagger, my dagger, 'tis time to go!

ANNE TOZIER PRINCE.

THE WOMAN FROM TOWN

By G. Vere Tyler

A SIMPLE farmhouse, square, homely, old. At one of the second-story windows a woman. By the window a magnolia tree, white with half-open cups that catch the drizzling rain. In the yard below old-fashioned roses in bloom. Above the roses humming birds; above the humming birds song birds; above the song birds an atmosphere of smoked pearl.

The woman at the window was not touched by these things, beautiful as they were. She had been in the country two weeks, and they no longer interested her. With hands clasped wearily at the back of her head, she peered past them vacantly, while the sun, that had been obscured for two days, burst through the clouds and enveloped her. The magnolia leaves caught the sudden glory, and gleamed. The roses lifted their heads and smiled, and the pebbles in the path that led from the high gate to the house, through ancient cedar bushes, shone like jewels. A man cast in coarse mould, with a sluggish form, that he bore, however, with grace, appeared simultaneously with the sun and stood in the gateway. To the woman this joyous expression of nature, as well as its more rugged expression in the man, were alike intended for her benefit. Indifferent to one, she instinctively studied the other, observing minutely the carriage of the head, the length of limb, the splendid proportions of the man.

He wore a blue cotton blouse that, partly open, exposed his thick, sun-burnt neck and hung loosely on his shoulders. Drab-colored trousers were stuffed rudely into clumsy, high-

topped boots. His eyes, heavy-lidded and dull, were the color of the blouse; his hair, thick and curly, was the color of the trousers. Occasionally his countenance lighted up with intelligence; usually it betrayed but the dull contentment of a healthy animal.

"A field god!" the woman thought, smiling inwardly, "a god of the fields!" Then with a shade of impatience, she added, aloud: "How long have I been likening ordinary men to gods, and adoring them to their ruin! And now this one!" A momentary feeling of disgust swept through her. A pill was to be swallowed for the sake of the effect. As this thought trailed through her mind, a girl, half-child, half-woman, bounded from the porch to the man's side.

She was his wife, Molly.

"Fools in a fool's paradise!" the woman muttered. It irritated her that this slip of a girl, redeemed from plainness only by a pair of innocent eyes and a wealth of silky black hair, should be the possessor of this splendid creature who attracted her attention—this enormous, stupid George—who, when she passed him sitting on the porch in the evening, inspired in her a desire to run her fingers through his hair, as one would caress the head of a Newfoundland dog. Apart from the robust personality of the man there was an atmosphere of refreshing cleanliness about him, more invigorating to her than the country air she had come to seek. Once she heard him say that every day when he left the fields he went to the river and plunged in. He was "too big," he had added, laughing, "for basins, or—"

glancing adoringly at his young wife—"Molly said so!" She had seen him one day shake his curly head on his return from this nymphaean bath, and the remembrance of the glistening effect in the sunlight remained in her mind.

The girl he was leading to the house looked up with beaming expression and smiled at her.

She responded with a nod and turned to make a careful toilet for the evening meal. For the first time since her arrival at this quiet country place as a Summer boarder she seriously considered the matter of personal adornment.

II

It was twelve o'clock at night three weeks later, and Molly and George were alone, facing each other.

The air was heavy with the scent of magnolia blossoms, and the moonlight shining coldly into the window showed the girl white and breathless. Frail before, she was now a skeleton. Her eyes, once such happy eyes, were now only wells of sickening agony. The beautiful hair—her one pride—fell about her wild and tangled.

"It's er lie you've told me!" she burst forth. "I seen you! I seen you! It's er lie!" she repeated, vehemently, and the flat, child-like breast heaved convulsively.

George was silent. He knew that she was right, that he had lied to her.

He wore as usual the blue blouse, rough trousers and high-topped boots, but instead of the fresh breath of the earth and fields about him there was a faint artificial odor of violet, sharper than the dense perfume of the magnolia blooms that made drowsy the air about them. It was this, he thought, this new, strange odor, penetrating him like a subtle poison, that made him feel so faint and dizzy.

"Molly," he whispered, in a husky voice, "listen to me. I ain't done no real harm—I—"

He laid his massive hands on her shoulders, but she sprang away from him, while the pain in her eyes lit up and blazed.

"Don't!" she screamed. "Don't you tetch me! It's that in me that's dangerous! It's that in me worse'n powder; it's that in me aching to 'splode an' kill! Don't come near me—fur—fur—I tell you I'm dangerous!"

"If you'd only listen!"

"Listen ter what—ter your lies? I tell you I *seen* you out there under the magnolia tree holdin' her in your arms and kissin' her!"

As if to shut out the horrible vision the girl raised her arms before her eyes.

"I ain't worth the pain I'm suffering," she stammered, "but all the same it's ten thousand souls on fire in me!"

"Molly!" George broke forth.

"Don't call me 'Molly!'" she cried, hysterically, facing him anew. "Ye ain't fit to breathe my name; ye ain't fit to be where I am. You've done killed me! Fur three weeks you ain't seen me no more'n the dorgs about the house! I haven't eat, an' I haven't slept, an' you never knowed! I've cried, an' you never heard! I've called you to come ter me, an' my voice mought 'a' been the wind! She's done made you blind an' deaf ter me, an' murderer uv my heart! She done took you—took you away from me!" Her sobs choked her. Presently she went on:

"What's worst is that I knows I'm helpless! 'Tain't the strong 'gainst the weak, it's the strong 'gainst nothin'! I knows it; I'm nothin'! I ain't no more'n a shot bird what's a-stiflin' an' a-suffocatin' an' can't die!"

George did not speak.

"That's it!" she exclaimed, flinging her arms up; "I'm dyin', an' I can't die!"

Impulsively she threw herself at his feet, and clutching his ankles in a fierce embrace, pressed her forehead to his coarse boots.

As she lay thus, her passionate sobs falling on his ears, all her young life

was passing through George's mind. He remembered how joyous she had ever been, how she was always laughing and singing about the house, how she used to fly into his arms and cling to his great breast like the bird to which she had likened herself. He felt the clasp of the poor little thin arms, that had worked so hard all her days. He recalled the prints of butter she made, the churning done in the early morning hours, while even he slept; how she swept and scrubbed and mended for them all. Then he thought of her tenderness to his mother, of the comfort she had been to her since his father died, and great tears filled his eyes and dropped down on her stricken form, the little form he had laid so low. With a sob escaping him, he bent down and lifted her to his breast.

"Molly," he said, huskily, "it's your house, drive her out; go an' drive her out as you would a snake that had crawled in, and when you've done it come back and say whatever's ter be done with me!"

III

INSIDE a small wayside station, early the next morning, a woman was seated on a rough chair, waiting for the train that was to pass at five o'clock.

Outside on the platform of the station a man was standing. On his face was a look of stolid defiance, and his brawny arms, the muscles of which showed plainly through the blue cotton blouse he wore, were crossed firmly on his breast. Beyond him lay yellow fields, where wild flowers and grasses were frying in a scorching sun. Bees and insects were humming about him; cocks were crowing in the distance; birds were fluttering overhead.

He saw nothing, heard nothing until presently the sound of a whistle announcing the approach of a train reached him. Then he looked eagerly down the railroad track. The woman inside, who had also heard the whistle,

rose and presented herself in the doorway. She also glanced down the track. Then she braced herself as for a conflict and nervously approached the man. He remained motionless, looking now across the fields that were drying in the scorching sun.

"I want your forgiveness," the woman said to him, timidly, "before the train arrives—before I leave."

He turned and looked at her.

"It was not my intention to bring about this trouble for you," she went on, in a tremulous voice. "All the morning I have been thinking of it and of my own wickedness."

He looked from her to the fields again.

"You don't know how terrible it is to think of one's wickedness—how terrifying—how desperate it makes one feel. I want to tell you how miserable I am—and—how penitent."

He was silent.

"There was a man once," she went on, rapidly, "a king—perhaps you have never heard of him—his name was Richard—Richard the Third—and he had a dream, a terrible dream of all the evil he had done, and he had done a great deal. He had killed people!" She gasped. "I have killed people. Are you listening?"

"Yes."

"I mean that they died on my account—on account of me—for me—killed themselves! Some with drunkenness and in other ways—one—yes, one with a pistol! Do you hear me?"

"Yes, I hear you."

"Then look at me! You must hear well what I have to say!"

"I hear."

"It made no impression on me—what I am telling you—their deaths, I mean!"

The man turned sharply, and grasping her arm in his hard fingers, pressed it until she cried out; then he released her and looked away again.

She was pale from the pain, but went on, talking vehemently:

"In those deaths I saw my power—realized myself—what I could do! *Their* suffering I never took into account—you see, I could not. I had

never taken anything into account but myself—and yes, my beauty! Look at me!”

He looked steadily into her face.

“And what I could do with it; what changes I could bring about; what joy—exultation—madness—what it could fulfil—upturn—overthrow—destroy! Do you understand?”

“Yes, I understand.”

“And when I saw you . . .”

An angry light gleamed in the man's eyes, that he fixed on a distant tree top.

“And when I saw you,” she repeated, “unconscious of yourself—asleep to your own powers, not even attempting to wring something out of life for your own enjoyment . . .”

A sickly smile crossed her features. “You see, I am not all selfishness—and when I saw you, as it were, asleep, I felt impelled—I could not help it—to waken you! I have done it with little children asleep in their cradles! Passivity! I could never stand it! Of course you do not know what I mean?”

He was silent.

“No—how could you?—you, whose knowledge of existence is on a par with that of a lion!” She laughed hysterically. “The fact that you had never experienced anything, never even heard of the experience of others, interested me—the desire to make you experience, through me, and to experience, through you, took possession of me! Ah!” she cried, laying her hand on his arm, “there are madnests stronger than drink, sports more cruel than the slaying of beasts!”

The man freed himself from her touch.

“When the passion for conquest, born of a woman's vanity, gets possession of her she must hunt desperately for prey! Do you know what her prey is?”

“Men.”

“Yes, you are right! Men! And you are a man! I wish you would look at me! I am confessing to you, confessing as I never before confessed to any living being. I am opening

my heart doors and telling you to look in. I am telling you that I had designs on you, wicked designs, that it was my intention to beguile you and destroy you! Instead—” a fierce frown darkened the man's brow—“*she* got in the way, she whom I had never once thought of, who was only the bird between the gun and the prey. You must try to forgive me. You *must* forgive me; your mother must forgive me! Oh! to be talked to by an old woman like that! Do you forgive me?”

“No.”

“But I tell you you must! If you do not, it is not consistent—not in keeping with your religion. Has not *she* forgiven me?”

“Yes, she has forgiven you.”

“And you will not?”

“No.”

The train was in sight, dashing gracefully around a bend of the road.

“You drove me out of doors—out of your house—I forgave you!”

He was silent.

She glanced at the approaching train.

“In the name—in Molly's name—in the name of *her* sweet generosity—will you not forgive me?”

“No.”

“I am suffering—you see that! Do you not care?”

“No.”

Her features contracted and her eyes flashed.

“You are cruel and wicked—your heart is a rock! What can I say to rouse your pity for me?”

“Nothing.”

She took a light parasol that she held in her hand and struck him across the face with it.

He remained motionless.

“George,” she whispered, “I love you.”

He smiled at her.

“To you alone—to you alone, since I was a child, since I could remember, I have spoken the truth! You believe that?”

“Yes.”

He did believe it—he knew it. Dull toiler of the fields though he was, in-

experienced, untaught, unlettered, he not only knew she had spoken the truth, but why.

With quick perception he realized that this woman, this unprincipled, subtle woman of the world, feeling the futility of her weapons of deceit to penetrate his rough surface, now had recourse to the arsenal of truth, where rusted the trusted artillery of an ingenuous womanhood. She was playing her last card, the last card of a defeated woman, determined to redeem herself, if but for a moment, and she was playing it magnificently.

A burst of steam, as the engine slackened up, hissed in their ears. The next moment the train stopped in front of them.

The man stooped down and picked up the satchels.

She stared at him in dismay; anger and supplication were in her eyes; passionate entreaty in every line of her face and form. His own countenance was immovable, expressionless.

"Aboard!" the conductor cried, and grasping her arm assisted her to the platform of the train. She entered, continuing to look over her shoulder at the man following her

with the satchels. He calmly placed them on the seat beside her. Then he left her.

As the train moved off, the woman leaned forward and peered into the narrow mirror that decorated the coach by her seat. When she saw herself she started.

The dramatic scene she had passed through, the passionate energy she had expended, the defeat she had endured, had left damaging imprints on her beauty. In that one quick glance she seemed to see how she would look as an old woman, forgotten of men, vanquished by time.

She immediately proceeded to make herself comfortable, banish the present situation and reach a consoling conclusion.

"It was more exciting," she thought, as she leaned luxuriously back in her seat, "than if he had yielded! But my face just now! I must be more careful in the economy of my emotions! He was not worth it! The stupid beast!"

The beast was kneeling by the bedside of his wife, raining tears on her emaciated hands, which he held in a painful grasp.

28

ON SARGENT'S CARMENCITA

CALL it illusion if you will, but yet,
 Within the confine of her pictured place,
 I clearly see her sway in vivid grace,
 Lithe-poised on one slim foot, and I forget
 This northern land—her dusky coronet,
 Her drooping lids, the line of scarlet mouth,
 Breathe all the drowsy languor of the South;
 Once more I hear the eager castanet
 Beat through the dreamy melodies of Spain,
 And throbbing back from bygone years, in sooth,
 I feel my pulses answer to the strain
 Her spell has waked—where, in immortal youth,
 Come Time, come Death, she throws a mock to fears,
 And ageless, deathless, dances down the years!

CHARLOTTE BECKER.

A WOMAN'S PRAYER

DEAR God, there is a single prayer
 That I would pray of Thee;
 It is not that I may not care
 Where he may go from me—
 My heart would seek and know him there,
 Were he on land or sea.

It is not that I may forget
 The tears mine eyes have shed;
 I seek no surcease of regret
 Till I at last am dead.
 I crave not peace of Thee, nor yet
 That I be comforted.

This is my prayer, that giving so
 The gift imperative,
 Bearing the bruises of the blow
 He struck while I shall live—
 Spare me, oh, God! that he should know
 That I can still forgive!

ETHEL M. KELLEY.



CROTCHETS OF A CYNIC

IN the race for wealth right often gets left.
 Ridicule, unless barbed with reason, is ridiculous.
 To be thoroughly hated one needs but to be reasonable.
 If many of us could see ourselves as we really are we should be ashamed
 to be on speaking terms with ourselves.
 Woman's sphere, in spite of all that her apologists may say, is at the best
 but a hemisphere.
 He that is successful can afford to smile; he that is not successful cannot
 afford to do otherwise.
 We do not always learn from the mistakes of others, but we are always
 ready to profit by them.
 Woman's visual memory is very defective, judging from the frequency
 with which she looks into a mirror.
 When a man thinks one woman is different from other women it argues
 that he does not know either the one or the others.

L. DE V. MATTHEWMAN.

THE REIGN OF PAH-PAH KUH-BAH

FROM THE BAHGONIAH ANNALS

By John Regnault Ellyson

THE Prince, while young and yet a petty ruler among men, added the last two syllables to his name in order to give it a more martial resonance. It was he who conquered all the numerous neighboring provinces and founded the present kingdom. Nevertheless, and in despite of the wishes of his subjects, he rejected all titles other than that of Prince, and Prince Pah-Pah Kuh-Bah he remained, though governing the most extensive dominions in the known world.

His people, however, never mentioned his title without coupling it with distinction. Since nothing resisted the success of his arms, they spoke of him as the incomparable, as the invincible Prince. But he was not more warlike than bountiful; twice a year, in each of his capital cities, the keepers of the royal treasury by his order flung gold to the people from the housetops. And he was also exceedingly wise; not only did he remodel the cumbrous code of ancient laws into a tablet of twelve articles, that anyone might read while running, but he proved his love for his people by weeding out crime, rewarding merit, ennobling the pure and the ambitious, and by establishing an era of unparalleled prosperity throughout his wide domains.

During his entire reign the very planets withheld their malign influence. There were no famines, no plagues, no floods, no earthquakes. There were wars, it is true, but the vanquished were ever the gainers; they kissed the sword that leveled them and rose covered with honors.

Now the Prince in whom such exceptional qualities were united was distinguished for the great originality of his notions and for the manner in which he executed his projects. Indeed, here could be found the secret of his many remarkable achievements. At certain intervals he plunged into a reverie, brooded long, conceived some unheard of idea, and that idea immediately became the passion of the hour.

At such times nobody questioned or vexed the sovereign. The wits held their peace; the ladies of the seraglio prattled in whispers; the courtiers grew more supple of knee and more discreet. Indeed, so often had the master's arbitrary genius wrought marvels that even the gray-beards and the great captains believed, or affected to believe, that these fixed ideas were nothing less than divine conceits.

Being prompted by his own humor in all things, it happened ever and anon that the Prince went far beyond the most reasonable bounds. But he lost no esteem thereby; for, though he was rather exacting in some affairs, he was yet in the main so generous and considerate in all matters save those coming under the ruling idea, that the priests and the courtiers found it more agreeable to flatter a prince swayed occasionally by novel caprices than a prince led at random perpetually by a thousand old whims and immemorial oddities.

One morning, in the third decade of his reign, the Prince awoke and smote his hands. At the signal the costumers came and performed their serv-

ices. He was bathed, perfumed and adorned. Then, after the manner of those days, the chiefs of the imperial household came and lingered in attendance while the Prince, at ease and in silence, sipped the dark sherbet of Song-Long and pondered.

Thus some time elapsed. Suddenly the Prince struck the table at his side. The blow shattered the table and resounded with a terrible noise. The servitors fell back affrighted, and for the moment fancied that the stars had paused in their course or that the heavens had fallen. The favorite nephew of the Prince, who was wiser than these, at once prostrated himself at the feet of his august uncle.

"Ah, I have an idea," said the Prince; "a brilliant idea, my dear Fur-Fuz. Let the Council be assembled two hours hence, and see that none shall be absent. Do you summon also the surgeons of the court, especially Kats-Pahr, and notify him to bring the case of instruments recently forwarded by the Emperor of China. There, dismiss my kinsmen. I shall go down into the garden unattended and wait your return."

In this garden, reached by a few steps from the royal chambers, the Prince commonly indulged in acrobatic feats and all kinds of exercises that develop the limbs and enrich the blood. It was a place fashioned for delightful pastimes. Hemmed in by high walls, rare vines and flowering shrubs, here could be seen a wonderful entanglement of bars and ropes and pulleys, and here were tracks for racing, too; spaces for wrestling and tumbling, and suitable couches for repose. You must know there was no man in the land that could match the Prince in any species of athletic contest, and even the foreign acrobats who came to the liberal court of the Prince were amazed and recompensed and excelled; they went back to their native countries with the most extravagant praise of the monarch's surpassing skill and strange prodigality.

On the morning of this day, however, he gave no heed to his pet diver-

sions. He strolled. He was deeply absorbed. He was wholly possessed by a single idea, and evidently the new idea was one of unusual novelty. The slaves, hidden among the vines, shuddered as they viewed the countenance of their master. Some kind of nameless light, an indescribable glow, reflected from his features and flashed in his eyes. It was the same light that had shone there on occasions of great moment, on notable battle-days and on that high festal night when the beautiful Amazonian Queen of Monomania for the first time unveiled herself before the Prince and placed her heart and kingdom at his feet.

Meanwhile, in the palace the Council hastily assembled. The priests and the nobles came, the princes and the mighty captains. At the appointed hour the sovereign entered, and forthwith the hundred doors of the audience-hall were closed and barred. Ordinarily the utmost secrecy was strictly observed, but the proceedings of this memorable noon-day were of such a singular character that the facts, passing from tongue to tongue, spread like so much fire.

It appears that, contrary to all custom, there had been a brief but stormy scene. In eloquent terms the Prince began by proposing that his symmetrical and picturesque legs should be removed by the surgeons. He was about to cite innumerable authorities drawn from the most sacred archives when the grave Council smiled. At this juncture the Prince frowned darkly and threatened, and the Council at once ceased to regard the affair as a jest, and reasoned, but the Prince grew furious, and thereupon, without further parleying, ordered that both his legs should be quickly severed at the hips in the very presence of the trembling ministers of state.

The command was obeyed.

Then for a time the royal household was filled with surprise, smothered indignation and dismay. However, by the end of the month the Prince, in fine order and in excellent humor, was again going about the palace with all his pristine agility.

It was singular enough, it was somewhat startling, it was at first perhaps a little grotesque, the spectacle of the Prince dwarfed by his own decree and despoiled of his shapely legs, but the extreme ease with which he walked on his hands, the nimble grace with which he poised himself on the edge of a divan or the back of his steed, the astonishing spirit and animal delight he exhibited in his new condition pleased the courtiers infinitely and confounded their nicest calculations.

Moreover, be it known that the insight and tact of the Prince in matters of public import, his clear judgment and keen sense of justice, his affability and sentiments of generosity in no wise suffered in consequence of the clipping of his fair figure. Certainly he seemed far happier, more untrammelled, less reserved, and he mixed more with the less exalted servitors of the palace. In the goodness of his heart he feigned to forget the dire punishments threatened on the morning that his bold resolve was so eagerly opposed by the Council of the Nation.

Nor did the people of the city fail in giving repeated proofs of their devotion. They worked themselves into a state of considerable fervor, for truly this lessening of the Prince, this majestic dwindling, strangely appealed to the popular imagination, and his showers of gold from the housetops on three successive days crowned the act with a splendid climax. Whenever he appeared on the public thoroughfares there were the beating of tymbals and rejoicings and the gathering of throngs and tumults of applause. In the daytime, along the route, streamers and silken trophies and banners were displayed and a rain of flowers fell from the windows and turrets of every mansion. By night the shadows were turned into lights, myriads of flambeaux and aromatic fires burned everywhere and music swelled up from every angle and corner of the streets. It was thought that the Prince, in spite of his apparent indif-

ference, was touched sincerely and charmed.

But, while he now rode much abroad and received the homage of citizens and strangers, there were rumors current that yet in secret the monarch once more brooded over some prodigious conception. And so it seemed, for soon another Council was convoked.

On this occasion the Prince set before the assembly the exceedingly remarkable scheme of removing his thrice-powerful arms, and he quoted long passages from the old codices by which he sought to sustain the dignity of his proposal. The Council was again stricken with surprise and alarm, and during the interval of suspense, the sovereign's nephew, in defiance of all decorum, rose and spoke in earnest protest against the wishes of his famous kinsman. He was eloquent, and the chambers murmured with approval. The Prince, however, grew black with rage and hurled his sceptre into the midst of those who cheered. He called aloud for the common executioners, and immediately upon their arrival the head of the young prince and his body were sundered.

There was then, happily, no further need of any such cruel measures. No creature dared follow a line of conduct in which the gallant Fur-Fuz had failed so lamentably, and so the Prince had both his goodly arms removed by Kats-Pahr, who obtained as a gift for his services a necklace of inestimable gems and an enormous casket filled with the new coin of the realm.

The people of the imperial city wept and the servitors at the palace day after day remained in breathless anticipation and doubt. At last, one evening there suddenly came shouts of joy down the long corridors and a merry host of dancing courtiers, and in a moment afterward the Prince appeared in ruddy vigor and admirable spirits.

He now seemed somewhat more rounded, but still virile and comely, and from the first he used himself with incredible dexterity and rapidly developed new resources, new means

of action and new muscles, so that he soon went everywhere he desired, bounded from the floor to the couch, rolled down the most precipitous steps and remounted them with equal nimbleness. It is even said that he bathed, that he dressed, that he ate, not served by others, as formerly, but by his own marvelous ingenuity. The Prince unquestionably had notions of his own, and he carried them out in detail and with rare skill.

The courtiers were constantly amazed and dazzled by this unanticipated genius in small matters exhibited by their beloved sovereign. They overwhelmed him with attentions, with sentiments of loyalty and with praise.

Fresh glory and honor, likewise, he received from the populace. For twice at least in every week he now rode forth on his black charger; he sat erect, balanced with ease; he was garbed in silk and purple; he gleamed with jewels, and his features were as impassive and serene as a god's. Bands of gay musicians and troops of warriors preceded him, and there followed the Prince's retinue and kinsmen, the envoys from distant isles and illustrious strangers. The paths were strewn with flowers and the fountains along the route cooled the air with perfumed waters. On all sides the enthusiasm exceeded all bounds; the voices of the multitude mingled with the sound of harps and drums and clarions. Those days on which the Prince went abroad were magnificent play-days for all the world, there being gifts and much mirth and manifold revels.

Never at any period, surely, did the people's love prove more sincere; never did the wisdom of the Prince shine forth more resplendently in edicts issued in ringing words, in new, sublime laws that read like inspirations, in decrees of judgment so merciful and yet so just; never indeed did the throne seem more firmly fixed in the affections of the kingdom nor the monarch more thoroughly master of the powerful throne.

But then for the third time the Council was suddenly convoked.

Some matter of grave import would again be moved by the Prince. None, however, could conjecture, none could divine what significant measure was now involved. The princes were called, the learned judges, the necromancers, the chief priests, the prime nobles and the most distinguished surgeons.

At length the great day dawned. No clouds dimmed the heavens. It was Summer, but the sea-winds freshened the air and tempered the rays of the sun, that glittered along the white walls and terraces of the city. The entire population awoke in a tremor of expectancy, and everywhere reverberated the noise of hurrying horse-hoofs, the tramp of soldiery and the shrill music of trumpeters.

During the early morning the wizards and the wise men arrived from the more remote quarters of the realm, and all these and others by noon assembled at the palace in great numbers. The portals leading from the royal chambers being then thrown open, the sovereign entered the audience-hall amid acclamations and the flourish of brazen trumpets.

There were formal salutations and ceremonies, and after these the august Prince very graciously made known his desire by means of a sombre and elaborate address. While the Prince spoke the most perfect silence prevailed throughout the vast assembly, and when the last syllables were uttered, the ominous hush still continued.

The grave and renowned dignitaries were dumb and immovable with amazement and horror. The young princes gazed upon the old priests. The learned judges eyed the necromancers. The nobles saw their own pallor in the ghastly visages of the surgeons. Each hoped that the other would lift the voice in opposition, but none dared breathe the desired word and hazard the unknown.

Meanwhile the Prince smiled at the mute acquiescence of the Council.

Immediately descending from the dais, unaided, he mounted at a single bound the marble table at the foot of the throne.

In accordance with his bidding the musicians now prepared their pieces. The priests and the jugglers advanced within the circle assigned. The favorites, the eunuchs, the familiar jesters also gathered about his sacred person. Then came the surgeons headed by their chief, each assuming his appointed place.

"Let there be music," commanded the Prince.

And at once a thousand harpers and trumpeters and tymbal beaters struck their instruments in unison, and a

peal arose mightier than a choral song.

"Now," said the Prince, "let my wishes be accomplished."

And so, at the word, the chief of the surgeons, looping up the laces of his sleeve, drew a curious, keen blade of subtle steel across the white throat of the monarch, and in the next moment he held aloft the severed head of his imperial master.

Even thus ended the reign of the most unique prince of the old dynasty, one of the foremost heroes of all time, a sovereign as famous for exceptional resources and incontestable power as for amazing inflexibility of will.

DISENCHANTMENT

OH, Psyche, Psyche, wherefore strive to know
 Love's guarded secrets and his mysteries?
 Take with both hands what joys he would bestow
 And laugh in gladness for the boon of these.
 Why will you doubt that Love is loveliest
 With his sad secrets still and unconfessed?

Why are you not content in knowing this:
 That he has laid whatever is of sweet
 Close on the lips that trembled to his kiss.
 Why seek to question with the joy complete?
 Why light your lamp and seek him where he lies
 To gain the sadness of the over-wise?

What rapture can the closer vision bring?
 Has joy so failed that grief can satisfy?
 Love known too well has eyes of sorrowing.
 Nay, love and laugh with him nor come too nigh,
 Oh, Psyche, lest henceforth, with sad wings furled,
 You wander broken-hearted through the world.

MC CREA PICKERING.

SO DELIGHTFULLY MODERN

"IS your new rector an agreeable man?"
 "Indeed he is—real nice; plays golf and squash, owns a naphtha launch and autommy, and besides, he isn't a bit religious."

HEARTICULTURAL COURTSHIP

TELL me, O dainty maid and fair,
 Whence do the roses come
 Which all the seasons round adorn
 Thy face so gladisome?

In answer to thy query, sir,
 An ye the place would know,
 The roses that I think ye mean
 Within my heart do grow.

Ah, me! ah, me! my pretty maid,
 Ye must a-weary toil
 In growing roses such as thine
 Upon such stony soil.

Softly, young sir, and do ye think
 That ye to judge are fit,
 Who have no knowledge of the place—
 Have ne'er been near to it?

Nay, ruffle not, my saucy maid;
 But since ye have this art,
 Couldst use it in thy gardening
 An I gave thee my heart?

Nay, nay, young sir, 'tis battered sore,
 'Tis fissured all about;
 And, too, methinks from over-use
 The soil hath been worn out.

But take it, take it, naughty maid!
 E'en sowed with sunflowers o'er,
 An ye have something planted there,
 Wilt trample it no more.

Since, sir, ye are importunate
 About this barren spot,
 I'll try it, an it virtue hath
 I'll plant forget-me-not.

TRUMAN ROBERTS ANDREWS.



PART OF THE BLUFF

"IT must be expensive—owning a palace on the cliffs at Newport."
 "Yes, you certainly must have the rocks."

THE EIGHTH NOCTURNE

By Zoe Anderson-Norris

SHE had an apartment on the Avenue Victor Hugo, near the Place de l'Étoile. It was in white and gold. She sat on a couch of yellow satin. Her gown was from Worth's.

"How is this?" I asked, following the maid with my card and seating myself in a thirteenth-century backless gilt chair. "I thought you were in Paris cultivating your voice for the stage—studying for grand opera. I thought you had aspirations that soared higher than your voice, which, when I last heard it, soared somewhat above high C."

"True, true," she assented, "but all is not gold that glitters, and studying for grand opera in Paris is not what it seems. To cultivate your voice in this city of magnificent distances and glorified art you must not only have a purse of some length and magnitude, but a strong arm round you all the time for protection as well as for support. And—well, listen and I will tell you how the whole thing came about."

She not only told me, but afterward showed me the place in the Quartier Latin where it happened, the barred windows of the studio and the big iron gate that so fortunately was left ajar. The gate and the studio are not far from the tomb of Napoleon.

The story may seem incredible, but I give it in her own words, straightforward, graphic and convincing.

"Perhaps you will say that we should have hesitated about going out to dinner with someone we had just met for the first time, and you may be right; but you must remem-

ber that we were also with Reggie, a man with a heart of gold, and an American. So was that other an American, but he has lived nearly all his life in Paris.

"If you had lived in a French *pension* for five long months you would have grasped the opportunity of eating a real dinner with as much avidity as did we. If it had been only Reginald, you see, the thing would never have happened. But he brought the artist. That was my fault. Hoping some day to become a celebrity myself, I have, or I had then, a sort of weakness for celebrities. Time and again I had insisted that Reggie, who knows every artist in Paris, introduce me to one.

"Adeline Stuart lived in the same *pension* with me. She was therefore as hungry as I was, if not hungrier. It was she who accompanied me to dine with the artist and Reginald.

"How many charming dinners have we had in New York—parties of us, and escaped with our lives; but then New York is not Paris; and in Paris, on the night of Mardi Gras, a woman was found in the Quartier Latin stabbed to death and buried beneath great heaps of confetti. Think of the mockery of that!

"The restaurant at which we were to dine was so near that we walked. Reggie was to go to Geneva at eleven. He had given orders for our dinner to be served at half-past eight.

"Soon we were ensconced in the little dining-room, we four. Waiters turned on electric lights all about us. I looked at the artist, then incredulously across at Adeline. She returned the look. Never in the world would you

have taken him for an artist. He was large and stout and beginning to be bald. Also, he had lived in Paris so long that he had forgotten how to dress. Only the women dress well here; the men do not. They copy their styles from the workingmen in the streets or the peasants in the fields. The artist wore a suit in so large a pattern of checks that it caused a roaring in one's ears.

"It has been the height of my ambition," I murmured, "to gaze on a real live artist, and now that ambition is gratified."

"Shall we have vermicelli or vegetable soup?" inquired Adeline.

"Make it oyster," said I. "I haven't tasted a genuine oyster since I left home."

"You flatter me," smiled the artist, while the waiters rushed in and out with kaleidoscopic rapidity, the proprietor at their head; for Reginald does things on a scale becoming an American and the Stars and Stripes. "I have had some little success. Though I was turned down at the Exposition by my own countrymen, I was accepted by the French."

"That goes," said I, suavely, "to show the good taste of the French."

"I had a faint inkling that Reginald was to pay for the dinner; he usually does; but it is just as well, in case of accident, to be polite."

"Wait a minute," I insisted, frowning at Adeline. "What is that you are ordering? Mutton! And I have lived for eight months in England! Have mercy!" She changed the order.

"Describe your work to me," I resumed, turning to the artist.

"It is almost impossible to describe it," he explained. "You can't say I paint figures, exactly, or landscapes, exactly. I paint a kind of combination of both; or you might say I paint an idea. That's what it is I paint—an idea."

"Happily relieved on this point, I contentedly consumed my oyster soup."

"It is like this," he went on. "People rarely talk so well as when they

hold forth on the subject most interesting to them, namely, themselves. I listened attentively. 'I am fond of music, very. There is Chopin. I love his Second Nocturne. In spite of its popularity, I love it; but the Eighth Nocturne!' Here he rolled his eyes ceilingward. 'I am painting that now. If you could only see it! It is a weird thing, strange, beautiful, exquisite!' Words failed him."

"I should like to see it," said I.

"We lingered over the turbot, the French peas, the chicken, and the bits of pink ice cream fetchingly tucked away in old-fashioned champagne glasses. And then at last it was finished with the coffee, that charming dinner, and Reginald paid the bill, as I knew he would. It was a yard long. He paid for the serviettes, for the tablecloth, for the dishes, the knives, the forks, the chairs, the table itself and the chandeliers; while the artist, not deeply interested, since it was not he who was paying, regarded alternately the sleeve of his coat and the blank wall."

"Won't we have time to drive by the studio and show them my Eighth Nocturne on the way to the Gare de Lyon, Reginald?" he questioned.

"And that was what we did."

"Passing down the stairway between a double row of bowing waiters, headed by the proprietor himself—the proprietors of Parisian restaurants have great respect for the Stars and Stripes, for where they wave the greenbacks wave also—we entered the cabs, I with the artist."

"In broad daylight, now, I tremble when I think how I drove from the boulevard down to the Quartier Latin alone in a cab with that artist."

"If you will permit me," he said, "I will smoke a cigarette."

"I permitted him. He searched for his cigarette case, first in one pocket and then in another. It was not to be found. He grew morose, then furious."

"My mother gave it to me," he grumbled. "I wouldn't have lost it for worlds."

"I endeavored to soothe him."

Here, I thought, was an ideal man, a painter of nocturnes, and fond of his mother.

"Maybe you left it at the *pension*," I told him, "there in the salon somewhere. If it is there I will send it to you in the morning."

"To all appearances he was appeased; but never again shall I trust to appearances in the case of celebrated artists of any nationality whatever.

"We alighted at the gate of his studio. It was an iron gate, very large, very tall, very strong.

"He unlocked it and entered. He left it ajar. Thank heaven, he left it ajar.

"His studio was on the ground floor. Some nights I wake with a start and a cry and thank my stars that that studio was on the ground floor.

"He unlocked the door, ushered us in and found a candle and lighted it, a candle about three inches long, stuck in a tall candlestick, black down one side where the sperm had dripped. Its flicker cast weird shadows through a large bare room with a shelf half-way round, on which were the unfinished pictures, among them the Eighth Nocturne. Windows lined one side. Being on the ground floor, these windows were barred—barred!

"The corners had scarcely begun to take shape in the flickering light when the artist sprang to the door, big, tall, strong, broad-shouldered in that awful checked suit, and double-locked it. Then he turned, grasped a sword lying on a bench near by and waved it toward us.

"Where is my cigarette case?" he stormed. "Give it to me or I will kill you, all three of you!"

"Adeline and I backed away in a bird-like rush, our arms outstretched, warding off the weapon, Reginald before us.

"What game is this, fool?" he demanded. "Put up that sword!"

"The artist pressed the point of it against Reginald's breast.

"Make her write!" he commanded,

nodding to a slip of paper on the shelf by the candle.

"I pushed forward, cold to the heart, seeing the tip of that sword pressing.

"Of course I will write," I panted. "What?"

"He shoved a box of crayons toward me. I took one, a thick, reddish stub about an inch in length, and wrote tremblingly the words he dictated, watching furtively that shining tip always pressing closer and closer to Reginald's heart.

"I have taken a cigarette case—" "Stop!" shouted Reginald. "What are you doing? Did you take it?"

"Of course not, but can't you see he is crazy? I don't mind dying so much; but I don't want to be mutilated—and here!"

"Write!" yelled the artist, with a threatening oath.

"You would have pitied me if you could have seen my fingers trembling down that page, writing:

"—with the initials C. M. G. marked on it."

"I shall never forget those initials, C. M. G.

"Now, sign your name!"

"I signed it in sprawling letters hardly recognizable. They commenced to dance before me. With all my strength I drew myself together. I would not fall fainting there. I would not!

"The artist flourished his sword.

"Come, sign this, you two!" he cried.

"Reginald stooped and read it.

"I will not," he declared. "What is this you have made her sign? That she has taken your cigarette case?—and she has not. I refuse to sign it," and he stormed and swore.

"Again the artist thrust the sword at him.

"If after I have counted three you don't sign," said he, "I push it through."

"Sign," I begged, drawing my gloved hand along the blade to see whether or not it was sharp, or some tin sword with which he was frightening us. It was sharp. I cut my glove.

"'Sign, Reginald,' I implored again. 'What does it matter?'"

"Then over my shoulder I called softly to Adeline:

"'Open the door!'"

"I heard her turn the key, draw the bolt and whisper to me:

"'Come!'"

"I ran for the open door and on out into the court.

"There was the open gate, praise be to all the guardian angels! There was the open gate.

"Screaming, screaming, screaming, we ran for that, through and out into the dark night that rang with our screams.

"Fear gave us wings. Once I looked back. I thought the artist was following. I seemed to see his dark figure and the gleam of his sword.

"When again I looked back he was gone.

"A man stood a little way off watching us, as if women's screams were a common sound in the Quartier Latin, as no doubt they are.

"We ran up to him.

"'Qu'est que ce-est?' he said.

"'Qu'est que ce-est!'"

"In the midst of my horrible fright I could have laughed.

"'Oh, nothing, nothing!' we answered; 'only a celebrated artist in a checked suit after us with a sword—that is all.'

"We ran on and on. Finally we rounded a corner and crouched, sobbing, on a bench.

"'Let us rest here awhile,' stammered Adeline, 'and try to think what to do.'

"But we were afraid to stay there. It was too near the studio. The shadowy night was filled with large artists brandishing gleaming, threatening swords.

"Rising and clinging together, we walked further on and found a cabby.

"'Take us home,' we begged. Then, realizing that the direction was a trifle indefinite, we gave him our number.

"In all probability Paris cabmen are accustomed to tears and sobs. In spite of the terrific rumbling over cobblestones, he must have heard ours; but he rumbled indifferently on.

"We huddled close together; we held each other's hands. Never before or since have Adeline and I been so desperately fond of each other as on that night.

"'After this,' I wailed, 'I walk with the common herd. No more celebrated artists for me!'"

"'I'll eat those old *pension* dinners till the end of time,' moaned Adeline, 'or go hungry—it's the same thing—before I'll dine out in Paris without an armed and panoplied guard. So help me!'"

"The cabby seemed to be taking us all over the city, but at last we got home, walked across the safe old court, and its big door was slammed and locked behind us. We looked up at our window. A light welcomed us there. It was like a star."

"And Reginald," said I, "what became of him?"

"Reginald! Bless him, he snatched the sword from the artist and forced him at the point of it to search for the missing cigarette case that had caused all the trouble. Ultimately he found it. Then he made him write us a letter of apology. Then, when the letter was finished, he wiped up the studio floor with him and left him there for repairs."

"And afterward you married him, this Reginald?"

She fluffed back her hair and laughed.

"Why, of course," said she. "Can't you see how difficult a thing it is for a girl to live alone here in Paris? How dangerous? Reginald!" She lingered lovingly over the name. "An American with a heart of gold and brave and true and . . . Really, there was nothing else for it, my dear girl, but to marry him."



GRESHAM'S DAY OFF

By Theodore Banta Sheldon

"ASK Mr. Gresham to step here," said Follansbee, dipping his pen in the mucilage and attempting to blot the stub of the book with the cheque he had just drawn.

"Where is my list of engagements and memoranda?" he asked of the mild-eyed young man who entered.

"Er—you destroyed it by mistake. I've made up a new one," and Gresham laid a typewritten sheet of paper on the desk.

Follansbee bent over it.

"H'm-m! Breakfast with Von Heilbron at eleven, and it's now ten minutes to twelve!"

"Colonel Baskam," announced the office boy. "Shall he come in, sir?"

"By gracious! I had forgotten him. Ask him to wait five minutes and then show him in. Gresham, will you take a letter to—now, who the devil was I going to write to? What have I on for this afternoon?"

Gresham picked up the list and read:

"Billings & Company at one-thirty; directors' meeting, H. F. & D., two o'clock; safe deposit vaults with Saunders, half-past three; try on at tailor's—"

"Confound it!"

"Dine at the Schuylers', and meet Wesley at eleven with the Danforth papers and plans."

"And to-morrow I go to Rodney in the morning and to Philadelphia in the afternoon!"

"No, Rodney in the afternoon and Philadelphia in the morning."

"Ah, yes; quite so, quite so."

"And then Wednesday, of course—you'll hardly need *me*, will you, sir?" queried Gresham.

"No, I think not— My *dear* Baskam, how do you do? Why didn't you come right in?"

The caller looked somewhat amazed as he stepped into the private office:

Curtis Follansbee had the day before returned from a three months' business trip to Nicaragua. Middle-aged, he found himself the possessor of wealth and political power. His schemes and deals fairly outnumbered his dollars, and of the former the Nicaraguan Company was the last but one. The "but one" was matrimony. In his nervous yet thoughtful manner Follansbee had decided to marry. He observed very business-like methods in becoming engaged to Helen Atkinson. He wished to be married with absolutely no fuss or frills. She was twenty-eight, sensible, poor and plain-looking. He proposed to her by letter the day before he left for Nicaragua; was accepted and forgot all about an engagement ring until he discovered a memorandum on the back of an envelope after he had been away six weeks. He indited a telegram directing Helen not to write or expect letters, as he was so busy—so busy, in fact, that he neglected to send it.

Wednesday evening, after having consummated an unexpected *coup* in forming a new company, Follansbee slapped his knee as he sat in the hotel corridor and exclaimed:

"Why the devil did I let him go today? This *is* a mess!"

He paced up and down a moment, then suddenly turning, almost ran into Gresham.

"I wish an immediate explanation!" said Follansbee.

"I supposed you would."

There was a strange look in Gresham's eyes.

"Well! Why did you neglect to remind me yesterday that this afternoon I was to marry Miss Atkinson?"

Gresham paused and looked at his shoes.

"Because I knew you were not to."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"I married her myself."

"What! I don't believe it!"

Drawing from his pocket an evening paper, Gresham pointed to a marriage notice. Follansbee read it, muttered to himself, and blurted out:

"Remind me to discharge you—er—that is—we will arrange for a discontinuance of your services in the morning."

Whereupon he rushed out.

Next day Gresham appeared at the office, but Follansbee forgot to discharge him.

"I can't let you have more than a week for your trip," was all he said.

THE SECRET OUT

WHY the waves are blue and sad,
The poets have not told us yet;
Perhaps they sob and feel so bad
Because they feel so very wet.

CERTAINLY SUSPICIOUS

BIBBS—Is he a drinking man?

GIBBS—I shouldn't wonder. I heard him say he didn't know where his next dollar was coming from, but he knew where it was going.

HOW HE KNEW

HE—The girl I am engaged to is very modest.

SHE—Is she?

HE—Yes. She asked me if I didn't think her twin sister was beautiful.

JUST THE MAN

JOBSON—I'm all run down. I think I'll try Dr. Fakem.

HOBSON—Good idea. He will wind you up all right.

NATURALLY IN THE DARK

PAULINE—Have you heard the latest scandal?

FLORENCE—No. This is the first time I have seen you in a week.

HIS MAGNIFIENCE

SEVEN years—Have I been with his Magnificence. He loves me and Selia, who is my wife; and the two little ones.

I have Rupees now, in my possession; given to me, by Him, after swearing at me.

He always swore at me. No others would he swear at.

Once I had pains. His Magnificence alleviated them, by giving me bullets (which were white). He taught me to swallow them, without chewing. Once I chewed.—The taste was bad and bitter.—I do not chew them now.

He has often told me, I was the largest liar in all India.—And then he would swear.—That was his way, as he loves me as a brother.

At Christmas time.—He would give the two little ones, eatables, in Brown, Red and Yellow—In many shapes—Pleasant to the taste.

To myself and Selia, He would make a great oration and then we would receive many gifts from him.

Without me, he could do nothing. All the years, I spent with Him, were pleasant. It was horse racing and such.

And all night, and far in the morn. It was drink and smoke with his three friends.

At times.—Much silver and gold would pass from one to another.

Then she came.—Her hair was the color of the Sun.

She came from afar.

Her abode was on the Hill.

Then a change, that was great took place.

It was thus—His magnificence became fussy.

No more drink No more smoke No more three friends.

It was all day, Darie Dey Go here Go there. Many times I went to the Bazaar, to see if the habilments He purchased, were ready.

He would say to me—Darie Dey tell the brownheaded heathen, to send my habilments at once—Immediately.

He never gave me a moment's Peace, after She came.

Yes—She made great trouble for myself and His Magnificence.

Wherever She was, He was. On Sunday we went to devotions. Before She came on Sunday we never devoted.

It was Sleep—Sleep all day—We never devoted.

After one year of this laborious work She and He had a Celebration which to Behold was Sonething.

Then He brought Her to our abiding place.

To look at Her made me feel joyful.

But She gave myself and Him much to do.

She called Him a great lazy boy.

She would say to me.—Darie Dey—Go the Bazaar, and get which is written on the paper.

She would tell me to Make Haste. Make Haste means. Go quick and return the same way.

Then She would tell me, An extra Rupee I would receive from Her—on settlement day. Then She would smile—Her teeth was the color of Pearl. How could one refuse to make haste? She finally took His Magnificence away. To a place called Eng-land, which is merry. He will return as without Me He can do nothing.

WALTER GRIEVE.

IN the beginning the woman forsakes the world for the man; in the end the man forsakes the woman for the world.

WAITING

HOW many minutes are there in a day?
 The weary watchers know, and only they;
 The clock ticks, and their quivering nerves are strained
 For sound of steps that never come their way!

I think that when men die and go to hell
 They do not burn in fire, as prophets tell;
 But that they wait, and wait, and wait, and wait
 For one who never comes, loved e'er so well.

ELSA BARKER.



HIS CONDESCENDING COMMENT

SOILED SPOONER—Dat feller, Wabbly Walker, uster be an actor, I'll bet on dat.

SELDUM FEDD—What makes you t'ink so?

SOILED SPOONER—Why, when he saw de sunrise yesterday mornin' he said dat it was "very clever."



OUT OF FASHION

MRS. SHEM said to Ham,
 "What a big fright I am,"
 As they walked through Mt. Ararat park;
 "Every nursemaid and cook
 Will declare that I look
 Just as if I came out of the ark."



INEXPRESSIBLE INFAMY

LENA—I don't blame you for detesting Belle. She tried to make trouble between you and the young man you are engaged to, didn't she?

BESSIE—It was worse than that. She tried to make trouble between me and a young man who hasn't proposed yet.